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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	06/15 After spring surge, Covid cases leveling off
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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/15/us/covid-cases-summer-us.html
GIST	<p>After a rise in known infections this spring, new coronavirus cases in the United States have leveled off in recent weeks, even as hospitalizations continue to inch upward and new Omicron subvariants rapidly circulate.</p> <p>The country is recording just over 105,000 new coronavirus cases a day, on average, a rate that has more or less held steady over the last month, according to a New York Times database.</p> <p>That figure is sure to be an undercount, as more people have turned to at-home testing, the results of which often go unreported. But other indicators are also showing signs of steadying: The number of patients hospitalized with the virus, is still growing, but doing so slowly, with the average hovering for most of this week around 29,000. Deaths have stayed below 400 a day for several weeks.</p> <p>With key indicators far below their Omicron winter peaks, longstanding public health orders continue to be lifted. In one sign of recent change, travelers flying to the United States no longer need to provide a negative test result. Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, explained the decision last week in part by pointing to booster shots and how Omicron had “generally caused less severe disease among those who are infected.”</p> <p>“We seem to be plateauing right now,” said Jennifer Nuzzo, a professor of epidemiology and the inaugural director of the Pandemic Center at Brown University’s School of Public Health, who is monitoring the spread of two new Omicron subvariants, BA.4 and BA.5, which have been gaining ground in the United States.</p> <p>“What is a little unclear to me is whether BA.4, BA.5, is going to see another bump,” she said. “But my best guess is we are not going to see another giant peak until possibly later in the summer for the southern states, and the fall and winter.”</p> <p>The current outlook varies from place to place.</p> <p>In Alameda County, Calif., which includes Oakland, officials reinstated a mask order earlier this month, citing growing hospitalizations locally. In Sacramento and Philadelphia, school officials have added mask requirements for summer school amid new subvariants and rising case rates.</p> <p>But in New York City, where cases slowed recently, Mayor Eric Adams, who had previously lifted a mask requirement in schools, announced last week that masks are now optional for toddlers in day care and preschool.</p> <p>Children younger than 5 are the last remaining group not yet eligible to be vaccinated, but that could change as federal officials consider whether to authorize vaccines for children as young as 6 months.</p> <p>If authorized, the option could offer relief for many families, who have been juggling day care closures and lingering fears that their children could be among the few who develop a serious case of Covid-19.</p> <p>“The biggest impact is you take away the rare chance of something bad happening,” said Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, who is part of an advisory panel to the Food and Drug Administration.</p> <p>But even if a vaccine is authorized for the final age group — roughly 18 million children younger than 5 — experts do not expect it to change the overall trajectory of the pandemic.</p> <p>Many children have already been infected with the virus — by one estimate, as many as 75 percent as of February. And vaccine uptake among children overall has been low.</p> <p>Federal officials have required rigorous testing to authorize vaccines as safe and effective, but some parents have expressed hesitancy as they weigh the newness of the vaccine against the risk from the virus.</p>

	<p>According to a Kaiser Family Foundation survey published last month, just 18 percent of parents with children under the age of 5 said they were eager to vaccinate their children right away.</p> <p>“It’s not like this is finally going to end the pandemic,” Dr. Nuzzo said of a vaccine for young children. But should the option become available, it could offer more flexibility for families, day cares and preschools. “I do think what will be really great is to help these kids go back to having normal lives.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Recall: Ford vehicles
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/ford-recall-gear-rollaway-escape/2022/06/15/id/1074506/
GIST	<p>Ford Motor Co. is recalling more than 2.9 million vehicles that could roll away because a damaged or missing part may prevent the vehicle from shifting into the intended gear.</p> <p>In a filing with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Ford said the recall covers various 2013-2019 Escape, 2013-2018 C-Max, 2013-2016 Fusion, 2013-2021 Transit Connect and 2015-2018 Edge vehicles, the agency said in a notice on Wednesday.</p> <p>A damaged or missing shift cable bushing may prevent the vehicle from shifting into the intended gear or the vehicle may roll after the driver selects the 'Park' position.</p> <p>Ford said it is aware of six reports alleging property damage and four reports of injuries potentially related to the recall population.</p> <p>This is Ford's fifth recall over the issue since 2018, it told the agency.</p> <p>Ford did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>After an April recall for the same issue, Ford continued to hold talks with NHTSA over field reports related to vehicles equipped that were not included in previous recalls.</p> <p>"Although claim rates and projected failures remained low, Ford recommended a safety recall for the remaining vehicles in North America" with the specific shift cable bushing.</p> <p>Ford said from April 2015 through March 2022, it has identified 1,630 warranty reports and 233 other reports attributed to this concern.</p> <p>Dealers will replace the under hood shift bushing and add a protective cap.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the No. 2 U.S. automaker said it was recalling about 49,000 Mustang Mach-E electric vehicles because a part could overheat and result in a loss of propulsion power.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Ford also recalled 53,103 four-door 2021-2022 Bronco vehicles because the passenger-side rear door may be opened from inside of the vehicle when the child safety lock is in the "ON" position.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 New Disney parks tour costs \$110,000
SOURCE	https://deadline.com/2022/06/disney-travel-package-twelve-parks-jet-110000-dollars-1235045464/
GIST	<p>As some fans complain about rising ticket prices at its theme parks, Disney is offering what it calls “a bucket list adventure” for 75 well-heeled guests.</p> <p>Priced at about \$110,000 — it’s actually a mere \$109,995 — the travel package is called Disney Parks Around the World: A Private Jet Adventure. That package price is per person and based on double occupancy, which means you’re in for about \$220,000, unless you pay a “single supplement” fee that starts at \$10,995. There are only 75 spots.</p>

	<p>The 24-day tour includes private jet travel to all 12 of the company's parks around the world plus stops at other manmade wonders such as the Taj Mahal, the Pyramids of Giza and the Eiffel Tower. It also includes a tour of the Lucasfilm Campus and the Walt Disney Studios. Dates for the jaunt are July 9-August 1, 2023, and booking begins next week. Airfare to and from departure and return cities is not included in the cost.</p> <p>Throughout the trip, guests will be attended to by three adventure guides, Disney VIPs, Imagineers, cultural experts and other surprise guests.</p> <p>The private jet is a "VIP-configured" Boeing 757, operated by Icelandair, with long-range capabilities that allow for direct flights to maximize guests' time in each destination. Its crew will include a chef, three dedicated staff members and a physician. The package price includes most meals.</p> <p>Minimum guest age is 12, but the suggested age is 14+. There is no discount for kids.</p> <p>Accommodations: Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa, Summit Skywalker Ranch, Tokyo Disneyland Hotel, Shanghai Disneyland Hotel, Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel, The Oberoi Amarvilas in Agra, Marriott Mena House in Cairo, Disney's Hotel New York – The Art of Marvel and Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Parts of Yellowstone closed thru summer
SOURCE	https://trib.com/news/state-and-regional/parts-of-yellowstone-will-remain-closed-through-summer/article_cc9d66da-ec3d-11ec-a1da-0b43ffad2cb8.html
GIST	<p>It will take months, if not years, for Yellowstone National Park to recover from the cataclysmic flooding that's ravaged it over the past two days, the park's top official said Tuesday.</p> <p>The damage will keep the northern half of Yellowstone National Park closed to tourists for the rest of the summer, Superintendent Cam Sholly told reporters. The area includes the iconic Lamar Valley, Tower Falls and Mammoth Hot Springs.</p> <p>The southern loop of Yellowstone National Park may reopen to visitors in a week or less, he added, using some type of reservation system or timed entry to control entry. Travel from Jackson was already going to be hampered by road construction. Entrances that would be reopened for the southern loop include the East, South and West gates near Cody, Jackson and West Yellowstone, respectively.</p> <p>"We will not know exactly what the timelines are, what the costs are or any of that information until we get teams on the ground that can actually assess what happened and what it's going to take to repair it," Sholly said.</p> <p>The southern loop includes Yellowstone Lake, Old Faithful, Norris Geyser Basin and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Mammoth Hot Springs, the park's headquarters and location of a historic hotel, cannot be reopened until the water and sewer systems have been assessed.</p> <p>"Trying to put normal visitation into one loop in Yellowstone is a disaster waiting to happen," Sholly said.</p> <p>All visitors have been removed from Yellowstone, Sholly said, except for a dozen backcountry campers who have been in contact with the Park Service and are making their way out. He estimated park staff urged about 15,000 people to leave Yellowstone on Monday.</p> <p>Before anything else happens, park crews have to wait for flood waters to recede enough to assess the damage and develop a plan for repairs. Assessment of the damage could be complicated because a foot of snow still remains in the Beartooth and Absaroka mountains that may send more snowmelt downstream this weekend.</p>

“We’ve kept our teams out of harm’s way,” Sholly said, although six park workers did lose their housing when a building outside the park was washed away by the Yellowstone River.

No deaths or injuries have been reported as a result of the record-setting flooding, although one park visitor did die from a cardiac arrest in an incident unrelated to the high water, Sholly said. The historic flooding is unfolding amidst the 150th anniversary of the park’s founding.

Meanwhile, park, state and county officials are scrambling to figure out what bridges and highways near the park may need repairs.

The park’s Montana border towns of Gardiner, Silver Gate and Cooke City were temporary islands, along with nearby residential areas in Cinnabar and Tom Miner basins due to roadway damage and lost bridges.

“It’s kind of hurry up and wait to see what the national park does and what kind of federal assistance comes in,” said Patrick Sipp, manager of Flying Pig Adventures and Whitewater in Gardiner, a rafting business. “Hopefully, the Highway 89 repairs come in quickly.”

The Park Service closed all five entrances as a precautionary measure on Monday to assess the damage to its network of roads and bridges. Six washouts of the road between the community of Gardiner, at the park’s North Entrance, and park headquarters in Mammoth Hot Springs – only five miles south – could be counted in a helicopter video the Park Service posted online. Whether that road will even be rebuilt is doubtful, Sholly said. Also badly damaged is the highway connecting Mammoth to Cooke City, cutting off the only route in the park that is open year-round.

Roads

Highway 89 is the main route to Gardiner from the north and the community of Livingston. The North Entrance is the second most popular in the park.

“Many bridges and roads are no longer operational,” the Park County (Montana) Office of Emergency Management reported on its website. On Monday, the Yellowstone River was flowing atop the highway in a narrow stretch known as Yankee Jim Canyon.

The river posted a record-high flow of 510,000 cubic feet per second on Monday at the U.S. Geological Survey’s Corwin Springs gauge downstream from Gardiner before dropping to 27,800 cfs by Tuesday.

Two years ago, Sipp said his company was running rafting trips down the Yellowstone River at that water level.

“I’m an optimist,” he added. “If 89 opens up we’ll have some semblance of a season.”

With little notice or fanfare, the Montana Department of Transportation and the Park County Sheriff’s Office opened Highway 89 at Yankee Jim Canyon late Tuesday morning. The route was only open to delivery and service vehicles, residents and outbound visitors. Whether it will remain open to residents is uncertain, said Park County Commissioner Bill Berg.

Rivers are also lapping at the bottoms of bridges in the southern part of the park, but so far, the damage has been much less severe.

“It’s kind of weird being here and knowing that there’s so much going on not far north of me,” said Ryan Sedgeley, who lives in Madison Junction, inside the park. Aside from the high water, it’s the quiet and the lack of traffic jams that stand out to him most.

Sedgeley — who is married to a Park Service employee — spoke very positively about the communications he’d received and the actions the agency had taken to manage the crisis so far. “It’s comforting when you see government working,” Sedgeley said.

He's currently running for office himself. Climate change is a big part of his platform.

"When you see these events on TV, and then they start hitting closer and closer to home ... It's real, and people are seeing it," he said. "People here in Wyoming, I think we've just got to start talking about it."

It may not be possible to rebuild the stretch of road carved away by the Yellowstone River between Mammoth Hot Springs and Gardiner. It suffered more damage than any other road in the park. And even if it can be rebuilt, officials are unsure whether it should be.

"I don't think it's going to be smart to invest potentially tens of millions of dollars, or however much it is, into repairing a road that may be subject to a similar flooding event in the future," Sholly said.

People displaced

Jason Tolman had never been to Yellowstone. Neither had his sons, ages 9 and 12.

He and his wife reserved the hotels a year in advance and booked the flights in January. On Sunday, the family flew at last from Columbus, Ohio to Bozeman, Montana, ready to spend a busy week at some of the region's biggest attractions — Old Faithful, the Tetons, the Cody Nite Rodeo.

They made it as far as their first hotel, in Gardiner, Montana, where they squeezed in some day-one sightseeing along the north loop of the park.

"Driving through that, the water was up a little bit, and it was raining all day," Tolman said. "It didn't seem that bad."

By Monday morning, they were stranded. The flooded Yellowstone River had torn away chunks of the roads they'd followed into town and through the park.

Unable to reach not only the 2-million-acre park but every town they'd hoped to visit, Tolman and his family checked out Gardiner's downtown, watched local restaurant menus shrink as supplies dwindled and became very familiar with the inside of their hotel room.

They tried to make the best of it, Tolman said, but they were all disappointed — especially his sons, who won't get to see most of the places they'd planned to visit. They've already decided to come back, but scheduling everything all over again could take a few years.

As for this trip, "it's going to be a straight shot to Bozeman no matter what day it is," Tolman said Tuesday morning.

Within hours, northbound travel on Highway 89 reopened for stuck visitors, and the Tollmans made their escape.

Farther to the south, Teton County Fairgrounds was a landing site for a few dozen displaced Yellowstone campers Monday.

About 38 RVs parked there overnight, according to Trista Hiltbrunner, a staff member at the fairgrounds. Some of them had come from inside the park, she said. By noon Tuesday, just a couple remained.

Cities and towns located just outside of Yellowstone were busy Tuesday connecting displaced visitors with lodging, and helping them figure out next steps.

"We really do operate as one," Rick Howe, vice president of the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, said of Yellowstone's gateway communities.

At this point, the chamber's mostly getting calls from people who were planning to visit the park this week, and suddenly had nowhere to go, he said. The chamber extended its phone services by three hours so it could accommodate the rush of calls. It's now live from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

Howe said Jackson is preparing to accept more displaced travelers and evacuees, but is waiting to hear more from park officials.

Earlier Tuesday, communication from park officials was limited. But Yellowstone-themed pages and groups on Facebook — some of them aimed at tourists — were exploding with activity.

Seasoned Yellowstoners spent Monday and Tuesday diligently posting updates about the park and its surrounding cities, and fielding questions from confused tourists.

One company, Yellowstone Tour Guides — based in Big Sky, Montana — is pooling resources for travelers on its Facebook page. A post Tuesday morning pointed displaced tourists to scenic destinations across Montana, Wyoming and Idaho that were open and safe for travel.

Tourism

The communities next to the park are heavily dependent on Yellowstone to drive the summer tourism season, which for two years was hampered by the pandemic and COVID-19 precautions.

On Sunday, Kara Schlabach had the busiest day of the year so far at the Cooke City coffee shop she co-owns, near the park's Northeast Entrance. Then flooding hit on Monday and now the streets are bare of tourists needed to keep her small business alive.

"It brought tears to my eyes because it's a ghost town," Schlabach said. "It's really devastating."

On Monday, Schlabach witnessed a Florida family of eight being plucked by a helicopter using a short haul line to lift them from a flooded rental after high waters stranded them. A different helicopter landed on the town's main street, since the landing pad was underwater, to evacuate a man suffering from hypothermia after he waded floodwaters to self-rescue.

Meanwhile, Pahaska Tepee Resort — located outside Cody, just two miles from Yellowstone's East Entrance — is shuttered through at least Thursday.

The resort boasts cabins, a restaurant, gift shop and outdoor activities. Its oldest lodge was built by William Cody (a.k.a. "Buffalo Bill").

Pahaska was booked at about 90% capacity at the beginning of the week, said Angela Coe, who runs the resort.

But rainfall over the weekend caused the North Fork Shoshone River to swell so much, it got into the lodge's water system, Coe said. Staff shut off the system Monday to prevent it from getting into the resort's tap, and sent all guests home.

The river has since receded. Coe said Pahaska Tepee is currently sending water samples to the Wyoming Department of Health in Cheyenne. The water needs to test safe two days in a row before the lodge can open up again, she said.

If all goes well, the resort will reopen Friday.

Coe said she doesn't expect Cody's tourism business to recover until the park's southern region reopens, too.

"It's gonna be a ripple effect," Coe said.

For now, the park's future remains a big question mark. And prospective vacationers aren't waiting for answers, Coe said. The phones at Pahaska Tepee have been ringing nonstop with cancellations.

"People are wanting to cancel in July and August," she said.

Deby Dixon has lived in the Yellowstone area for 10 years now. She's captivated with its wildlife — especially the wolves — and its wide-open valleys, she said.

Like thousands of others, Dixon's livelihood depends on helping share that sense of wonder with visitors. She photographs, leads tours and writes stories about the park. She also sublets a vacation rental in Gardiner.

But with Yellowstone's northern region out of commission, she fears that livelihood's been dashed.

"As a tour guide, I'm completely out of business," she said. "As a vacation rental, I'm completely out of business."

On Monday, Dixon recorded a Gardiner house and garage for Yellowstone park staff teetering, and finally falling, into the raging waters of the Yellowstone River. She posted the footage to her Facebook page, which has since been shared thousands of times.

Housing has long been scarce in Yellowstone's communities. A lack of affordable, quality rentals in the region has led workers to commute from far-flung places, cram into tiny apartments or even live in cars and tents.

That housing crunch could soon reverse in some places, Dixon pointed out. If infrastructure damage proves bad enough in Gardiner, for instance, people will stop coming. She's worried about local businesses.

Dixon was supposed to renew her lease for her vacation rental on Monday, but the flooding was so bad she couldn't meet with her landlord. She doesn't see a point in renting it anymore — there may not be a market, she said.

Dixon isn't sure what her future holds. She's thinking of relocating to another part of the country, and doubling down on her writing career. She's working on two books right now, she said.

"I'm thinking about leaving completely for a while," she said.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Mortgage demand 57% lower than year ago
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/06/15/mortgage-demand-is-now-roughly-half-of-what-it-was-a-year-ago-as-interest-rates-move-even-higher.html
GIST	<p>Total mortgage application volume was 52.7% lower last week than the same week one year ago, according to the Mortgage Bankers Association's seasonally adjusted index. Sharply rising interest rates are decimating refinance volume, and those rates, along with sky-high home prices and a shortage of houses for sale, are hitting demand from potential buyers.</p> <p>Last week, the average contract interest rate for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages with conforming loan balances (\$647,200 or less) increased to 5.65% from 5.40%, with points rising to 0.71 from 0.60 (including the origination fee) for loans with a 20% down payment. This week they surged even higher, with the average rate hitting 6.28% on Tuesday, according to a daily measure from Mortgage News Daily.</p> <p>"Mortgage rates followed Treasury yields up in response to higher-than-expected inflation and anticipation that the Federal Reserve will need to raise rates at a faster pace," said Joel Kan, an MBA economist.</p>

	<p>Weekly mortgage application volume rebounded slightly compared with the previous, holiday-adjusted week. Refinance demand rose 4% for the week but was 76% lower than the same week one year ago.</p> <p>Mortgage applications from homebuyers rose 8% for the week but were 16% lower compared with a year ago.</p> <p>“Despite the increase in rates, application activity rebounded following the Memorial Day holiday week but remained 0.29 percent below pre-holiday levels,” added Kan.</p> <p>The housing market is now reeling in a rising interest rate environment. After two years of record-low rates, fueled by the Federal Reserve’s Covid pandemic-induced purchases of mortgage-backed bonds, home prices are overheated and affordability is now in the basement. Major real estate brokerages, Redfin and Compass, both announced layoffs Tuesday.</p> <p>“Mortgage rates increased faster than at any point in history. We could be facing years, not months, of fewer home sales, and Redfin still plans to thrive. If falling from \$97 per share to \$8 doesn’t put a company through heck, I don’t know what does,” wrote Redfin CEO Glenn Kelman on the company’s website.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 WHO concern: global monkeypox outbreak
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/06/monkeypox-outbreak-spurs-who-to-consider-declaring-international-emergency/
GIST	<p>The World Health Organization will convene its emergency committee of expert advisors Thursday, June 23, to consider whether it should declare the growing, multinational monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).</p> <p>As of Tuesday, June 14, WHO has received reports of more than 1,600 confirmed monkeypox cases and almost 1,500 suspected cases from 39 countries. Those countries include eight in which monkeypox infections were previously known to spill over from animals, and 32 newly affected countries, most of which are in Europe, but also include Australia and countries in the Americas and Eastern Mediterranean.</p> <p>There have been 72 monkeypox deaths reported this year from African countries that have long been affected by limited spillovers. So far, there are no confirmed deaths among cases in newly affected countries, but WHO is seeking verification of a reported monkeypox-related death in Brazil.</p> <p>"The global outbreak of monkeypox is clearly unusual and concerning," WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a press briefing Tuesday. For that reason, Tedros decided to convene the emergency committee to determine if it constitutes a PHEIC.</p> <p>A PHEIC is WHO's highest level of alarm. The United Nations agency defines a PHEIC as "an extraordinary event which is determined to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease and to potentially require a coordinated international response." This definition implies a situation that is "serious, sudden, unusual or unexpected." Previous events that reached the level of PHEIC include the current COVID-19 pandemic, the Zika outbreak of 2016, and the 2014 to 2016 West Africa Ebola epidemic.</p> <p>In the press briefing Tuesday, Tedros boiled down the definition of a PHEIC to three primary criteria: that the situation is unusual, is affecting multiple countries, and would benefit from collaboration and coordination.</p> <p>"I think it's now clear that there is an unusual situation, meaning even the virus is behaving unusually from how it used to behave in the past," Tedros said. "But not only that, it's also affecting more and more countries, and we believe that it needs some coordinated response because of the geographic spread."</p>

Unusual outbreak

By saying the virus behaves differently in this outbreak, Tedros was referring to the apparent spread through sexual networks, largely among men who have sex with men. Monkeypox has long been known to spread primarily through direct skin-to-skin contact or prolonged, intimate face-to-face contact, both of which occur during various sexual activities. But, monkeypox is not considered a sexually transmitted infection in the classic sense. It's still unclear if the virus can spread via semen or vaginal fluids, specifically.

Further, monkeypox was previously seen as a virus that's not easily spread from person to person. But, now it seems to be spreading quite readily through sexual networks in the current outbreak. Generally, the virus is known to be present in wild animals in Central and Western African countries and has occasionally spilled over to humans, typically producing only small, self-limiting outbreaks. Some of the longest previously documented outbreaks have included [just six to nine successive jumps](#) from person to person before fizzling out. Those most at risk of infection are health care workers and family members who have intimate contact with an infected person.

Another unusual aspect of this outbreak is the spectrum of symptoms. Classic symptoms of monkeypox include an early flu-like phase followed by the development of lesions that spread all over the body, concentrating on the extremities, including the face, palms of the hands, and soles of the feet. But in the current outbreak, some infected people do not experience an early flu-like phase or don't get it initially. Some have reported much milder and limited lesions—often starting in the anal and genital areas. As such, clinicians have reported that cases in the current outbreak can be hard to distinguish from common sexually transmitted infections, such as syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea.

With the unusual aspects of the outbreak, the growing list of countries affected, and the need for collaboration, the three criteria for a PHEIC are "very, very clear now," Tedros said.

Advice and updates

If the emergency committee recommends declaring a PHEIC next week, then Tedros will have the final say on making the declaration. If he declares a PHEIC, WHO will issue temporary, non-binding recommendations to member states and can set global standards of practice for control and response per [International Health Regulations](#). The recommendations and standards can address travel, trade, quarantine, screening, and treatment.

But, regardless of whether the expert advisors recommend a PHEIC declaration next week, the meeting alone will be valuable, Tedros argued. The advisors will gather to discuss the situation, the latest data on the virus, transmission, and cases. The meeting "will shed light on any issues that can help us to respond even more, in a more organized way," Tedros said.

Already, WHO has worked to raise awareness of the outbreak and disease, and urged countries to conduct surveillance and contact tracing. The agency also released [interim guidance](#) today on the use and equitable distribution of vaccines that can prevent monkeypox.

Lastly, Tedros also noted that WHO is working with partners and experts to rename the monkeypox virus, its two clades (currently called West African and Congo Basin), and the disease.

Many scientists and experts say the current designations are [stigmatizing, discriminatory, and racist](#). The virus first got its name after being discovered in captive monkeys in a Danish laboratory in 1958, but monkeys are not thought to be the source of the virus. The main suspects are rodents. Moreover, the current outbreak has no clear link to African countries.

WHO will announce the new names "as soon as possible," Tedros said Tuesday.

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SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/alexei-navalny-has-gone-missing-from-russian-prison-say-allies
GIST	<p>The imprisoned Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny has been transferred to maximum-security prison, according to the chairman of a prison monitoring commission.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Navalny was moved to the IK-6 prison in the village of Melekhovo in the Vladimir region, Russian news agencies reported, citing Sergei Yazhan, chairman of the regional Public Monitoring Commission.</p> <p>IK-6 reportedly has a notorious reputation with widespread claims of torture and abuse.</p> <p>Prison transfers in Russia sometimes take days and are shrouded in secrecy. The lack of information about the whereabouts of Navalny, the most determined political foe of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, had worried his allies.</p> <p>Navalny's closest ally, Leonid Volkov, said on Telegram that the politician's lawyer went to visit him in prison earlier on Tuesday and was told that "there is no such convict here".</p> <p>Navalny was arrested in January 2021 upon returning from Germany – where he had been recuperating from nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on the Kremlin – and handed a two and a half year sentence for a parole violation.</p> <p>In March 2022 Navalny was sentenced to nine years in prison for fraud and contempt of court, charges he rejected as politically motivated and an attempt by the authorities to keep him behind bars for as long as possible.</p> <p>The judge ordered him to serve the new sentence in a maximum-security prison. He was supposed to be transferred to one after he lost his appeal.</p> <p>The new conviction followed a year-long Kremlin crackdown on Navalny's supporters, other opposition activists and independent journalists in which authorities appear eager to stifle all dissent.</p> <p>Navalny's close associates have faced criminal charges and many have left the country, while his group's political infrastructure – an anti-corruption foundation and a nationwide network of regional offices – has been destroyed after being labelled an extremist organisation.</p> <p>Until his transfer on Tuesday, Navalny had been at the IK-2 penal colony in the Vladimir region, about 60 miles east of the Russian capital. The facility in the town of Pokrov stands out among Russian penitentiaries for its especially strict inmate routines, which include standing at attention for hours.</p> <p>Russia's secrecy about prisoner transfers has come under criticism from human rights advocates.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Railroads drive Russia latest gains Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-19th-century-technology-driving-russias-latest-gains-in-ukraine-railroads-11655218602?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>Russian forces have advanced in eastern Ukraine over recent weeks behind overwhelming artillery barrages, a shift in fortunes made possible by better access to rail lines delivering tons of ammunition and other supplies.</p> <p>Trains are the Russian military's go-to method for moving troops and heavy weapons. In Ukraine's industrialized Donbas region, dense rail networks have played to Moscow's advantage.</p> <p>Russia's military depends so heavily on trains that it maintains an elite Railroad Force, a service branch once common in countries through World War II. The unit has camouflage-painted armored train cars</p>

equipped with anti-aircraft cannons and artillery to guard supply trains, and its troops are trained to repair bombed tracks while under enemy fire. Russia's Defense Ministry said it has restored 750 miles of track in the land corridor it now controls in Ukraine's southeast.

"Even if Ukrainians destroy rail lines, it will just slow the Russians, not stop them," said Alex Vershinin, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel who has analyzed Russian military logistics.

But Russia's heavy reliance on train transport, a 19th-century technology, reveals critical gaps in its logistics, the coordinated transfer of supplies. Russia's struggle to supply troops away from rail lines has slowed its invasion and contributed to catastrophic failures in its early offensives to take Kyiv and [Kharkiv](#). It could also shape the conflict going forward.

Unlike the U.S. and other countries that have adopted modern military logistics, Russia has largely remained wedded to traditional Soviet-era methods. It isn't just a sign of the military's failure, according to Western officials. The shortfall results from a lack of modernization in Russia's economy.

Russia boasts one of the world's largest military forces, equipped with nuclear submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles, but it has few shipping containers, forklifts or pallets of the kind the U.S. is using to speed supplies into Ukraine, according to logistics experts.

Instead of the heavily mechanized logistics system used for decades by Western businesses and militaries, Russia's military relies on bountiful conscript labor to move gear, much of it packed in unwieldy coffin-size wooden crates.

"The U.S. has built logistics like we are short of people, and Russia has done it like manpower is free," said Trent Telenko, who spent 33 years at the Pentagon's Defense Contract Management Agency and has studied Russian military logistics.

Supply-chain management is a booming field in much of the world. Yet in the World Bank's most recent Logistics Performance Index, from 2018, Russia placed 75th out of 160 countries, between Paraguay and Benin. Germany ranked first, the U.S. 14th and China 26th.

Modern cargo handling relies on containers of standard sizes that fit trucks, train cars, ships and hoisting equipment. Russia's container ports in 2020 handled slightly more of the containers than those in Colombia and fewer than France, according to United Nations data. The volume of container traffic passing through Russia has been largely flat since 2013, while global volume rose 23% over the same period.

Russians load cargo manually into railway vehicles that travel its national rail system, which forms the backbone of the country's freight network. Railways reach deep into sparsely populated corners of Siberia, with many lines built by Gulag slave labor under Stalin. The U.S.S.R. used train tracks with a wider gauge than Western Europe, in part to thwart invasion. In recent years, that disparity has slowed rail commerce with other countries, further isolating Russia's logistics industry.

Ukraine, once part of the U.S.S.R., has the same wide-gauge tracks, making it easy for Russian trains to roll in during the invasion.

Despite being the world's largest country by land area, Russia has only 963,000 miles of highway, according to 2020 figures from Russia's state statistics agency. That leaves some smaller cities without access to large delivery trucks. The U.S., with less than 60% the area of Russia, has 4.2 million miles of highway, according to government data.

Russia's lack of civilian trucks is mirrored in its military, which has long faced vehicle shortages. Western intelligence analysts during the Cold War could judge Soviet battle readiness by seeing if army trucks were deployed to help farms collect the harvest rather than move troops.

All by hand

Days after Moscow first stormed into Ukraine in February, a Russian soldier radioed comrades to complain he was stuck. “I just need a gas station,” said the soldier, identified as Buran 30, over an open frequency captured by intelligence firm Shadowbreak International. “Equipment is stopping.”

In the weeks that followed, Russian soldiers abandoned scores of military vehicles that had run out of fuel or needed spare parts, according to Ukrainian and Western intelligence. Fuel trucks, lightly armored and potentially explosive, and other supply vehicles were easy targets of Ukrainian fighters. Short of fuel, food and ammunition, Russian troops struggled.

Efficiency and worker safety, goals of for-profit logistics operations in the West, haven’t been a priority for Moscow’s quartermasters.

Russia’s wooden crates, which can weigh more than 100 pounds when full, are similar to ones the U.S. used in the 1940s. “They’d get everyone who wasn’t an officer and make them lug things” into trucks, said Georgy, a Russian conscripted into a logistical support brigade in 2016 and who asked to be identified by only one name.

He recalled seemingly endless work cradling the splintery containers or grabbing them by small metal handles that dug into his fingers. The painful work was accepted as character-building, Georgy said.

The U.S. resisted mechanizing military logistics for the first decades of the 20th century, aiming to keep peace with labor unions representing civilian dockworkers who loaded vital supplies, said Manley Irwin, an emeritus professor of economics at University of New Hampshire who studies U.S. Navy history. That changed in World War II.

U.S. Marines island-hopping across the Pacific in pursuit of Japanese forces repeatedly outraced their supplies. To speed the movement of provisions, the Navy looked to transport systems used by U.S. companies and tapped corporate managers to help improve military logistics.

A wartime study found that the man-hours required to load and unload supply ships could be cut to 203 from 682 by using forklift-and-pallet systems.

“What saved them was bringing in industry,” Mr. Irwin said. The forklift was deemed so significant to the U.S. military, he said, that literature about its various wartime uses and methods was classified as secret.

The Russian economy under President Vladimir Putin has advanced beyond Soviet-era practices. But investment has focused largely on extractive resource sectors, like petroleum and minerals, rather than advanced manufacturing and logistics.

The easing of economic restrictions in post-Soviet Russia allowed it to obtain more-advanced technology, superior production equipment and to hire experienced foreign managers. But that also increased Russia’s reliance on outsiders to build its industrial base.

Specialized roles in industry, such as supply chain supervisor, had only begun taking root in Russian businesses in 2014, when ties with the West were frayed over Moscow’s seizure of Crimea from Ukraine. Sanctions recently imposed after the invasion of Ukraine are expected to set back Russia’s logistics even further.

Without domestic logistics expertise, Russia’s military lacks a model to challenge its resistance to change, which is typical of armed forces, analysts said.

Boxed in

Private-sector know-how rescued the Pentagon in 1965, when Washington ratcheted up the number of troops in Vietnam. Supplies piled up on the shores of the embattled country, and ships were waiting weeks to unload.

American shipping entrepreneur Malcom McLean, who had led development of the standardized shipping container almost a decade earlier, persuaded the Defense Department to adopt his innovation. Taking the risk of investing his own money, he built a container terminal at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

“A lot of people in the military were opposed to containers in Vietnam, taking a not-invented-here attitude,” said Marc Levinson, author of “The Box,” a history of the shipping container. “In pretty short order, containers solved the military’s problems. It really transformed the ability to fight the war.”

The use of containers by the military quickly catapulted demand among civilian-cargo movers, Mr. Levinson said.

Early this year, before Russia’s Feb. 24 invasion, a steady flow of U.S. cargo planes landed at Kyiv’s Boryspil Airport. Mechanized loaders moved pallets of Javelin antitank rockets, artillery shells and ammunition to forklifts, which hoisted them onto military trucks destined for bases across Ukraine. The speedy deliveries helped Ukrainians repel Russian forces from the capital of Kyiv.

The U.S. military’s commitment to logistics automation is embodied in the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System that President Biden recently promised to Ukraine. The 5-ton truck has robotic arms that load prepackaged rockets ready for launching and can be operated by a single soldier. Comparable Russian systems must be loaded and prepared manually by a team.

Mr. Telenko, who followed the development of such automated systems over the years, said the contrast between the two countries reflects how their respective societies approach risk. In the U.S., public accountability and the prospect of litigation prompted the military to reduce as much human fallibility in logistics as possible.

“There’s a cultural aversion to risk built into the American military supply chain that Russia doesn’t have,” Mr. Telenko said. Increased safety and efficiency have the added benefit for the Pentagon of reducing payouts in veterans’ benefits, a large expense, and leaving more money for operations, training and equipment.

“A military can’t be better than the social system it grows out of,” he said.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Ukraine NATO allies widening rift
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-nato-allies-strain-to-keep-up-pressure-on-russia-11655279193?mod=hp_lead_pos8
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS—NATO defense ministers are set to gather here Wednesday as they contend with widening rifts over how much military assistance to give Ukraine and how far to go in answering Kyiv’s increasingly urgent pleas for help to repel invading Russian forces.</p> <p>Moscow’s troops have pushed deeper into Ukraine in recent weeks by firing vast amounts of artillery supplied largely by rail from Russia, which has large munition stocks at its disposal. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has called on Western governments to provide more powerful weapons to counter the attacks. Leaders from countries in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have responded with varying degrees of alarm to the situation, and are discussing among themselves how quickly and aggressively to act.</p> <p>To address the issue, the NATO meeting will be preceded by a separate gathering of what is being called the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, the roughly 50 countries that are providing lethal and nonlethal aid to Ukraine. The campaign, which began at the U.S. air base in Ramstein, Germany, in late April, has sought to promote and coordinate international contributions to Ukraine’s military and its civil-protection forces.</p>

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will host the contact group meeting, supported by Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Mr. Austin is expected to announce new U.S. military assistance, but the exact nature of that aid remains unclear.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said on [Twitter](#) Monday after a meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink that he was confident about “further fruitful cooperation.” Mr. Reznikov is scheduled to attend the meetings at NATO on Wednesday.

The contact group, which includes all 30 NATO countries, will meet at the alliance’s headquarters, but its leaders are straining to make clear that it isn’t a NATO event. The meeting is separate because it includes non-NATO countries and because the alliance is making strenuous efforts not to get involved in combat with Russia. NATO fears that overt involvement beyond supplying Kyiv with equipment and financial support could bring Western countries into direct conflict with Russia and spark a wider war.

“Individually, we are all committed to supporting Ukraine in one way or another,” said U.S. Ambassador to NATO Julianne Smith. “We will leave it to individual allies to make their own sovereign decisions on what kind of assistance that they want to provide.”

Those decisions are sparking growing controversy. [Countries closest to the fighting](#) and that feel threatened by Russia are providing the most weaponry and advocating loudest for immediate and aggressive support. Those further away or who feel greater economic pain from the conflict, particularly Germany and France, are pushing for a longer-term perspective on the conflict.

On Friday, leaders of nine NATO countries along the alliance’s eastern border—all once occupied or controlled by Moscow’s forces and currently Ukraine’s staunchest backers—gathered in Bucharest and reiterated in a statement their “unwavering commitment to Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

Two days earlier, defense ministers from NATO and European Union countries bordering the Baltic or North Sea, known as the Northern Group, gathered in Reykjavik, Iceland, to condemn Moscow’s attack and support Ukraine. The countries, led by the U.K., all share land borders or maritime contact with Russia, and are also at the forefront of supporting Kyiv.

The Northern Group and Bucharest Nine both predate Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and members stress that they don’t canvass within NATO the way parliamentary political groupings do. But the groupings do aim to give smaller members more of a voice at NATO and four countries particularly active in supporting Ukraine—Poland and the three Baltic states—are in both clubs.

“Different regional groupings reveal different threat perceptions and responses,” said Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer, director of research on trans-Atlantic security at the German Marshall Fund in Paris. “Like all crises, the war in Ukraine is only exacerbating existing divides.”

Ms. de Hoop Scheffer said it was politically significant that the leaders of France, Germany and Italy planned to meet Mr. Zelensky in Kyiv later this week. The three countries have irked the Ukrainian leaders and NATO allies by either not delivering the military equipment that has been promised or making comments that have been viewed by some observers as softening their condemnation of Russia.

Recent comments by President Biden have been interpreted by some people as [softening his earlier, aggressively pro-Ukraine stance](#) and potentially opening the door to a negotiated settlement short of an outright Ukrainian victory. But the [U.S. continues to lead the push](#) to supply Kyiv with weapons through the contact group.

Ms. Smith, the NATO ambassador, said the U.S. has a tradition of running similar coordination groups, such as one to counter Islamic State. She said that within NATO “we always have different debates and perspectives” but she didn’t see much friction inside the alliance.

“Obviously, those countries that are closest to the war in Ukraine are feeling that their security situation is increasingly at risk, and they feel added vulnerabilities,” she said.

Ms. de Hoop Scheffer said that war fatigue in countries away from the front line risked widening divisions with those closer to Russia.

“We have been congratulating ourselves for being united, but from the beginning the unity was fragile,” she said.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Supplier price gains accelerated in May
SOURCE	<p>U.S. suppliers’ prices rose in May amid higher food and energy costs, adding to pressure on inflation.</p> <p>The producer-price index, which measures what suppliers are charging businesses and other customers, rose a seasonally adjusted 0.8% in May from the prior month, up from a 0.4% monthly gain in April, the Labor Department said Tuesday.</p> <p>Producer prices had moderated somewhat in April, after the March gain had been the highest since records began in 2010, pushed up by surging energy prices after Russia invaded Ukraine.</p> <p>The so-called core price index—which excludes the often-volatile categories of food, energy and supplier margins—rose 0.5% after a 0.4% gain the prior month.</p> <p>On an annualized basis, the PPI rose 10.8% in May from a year ago, down slightly from a revised 10.9% in April. May marked the sixth consecutive month of double-digit annual gains for producer prices.</p> <p>Economists are watching producer- and consumer-price indexes closely for signs that inflation could be peaking. With the annual increase in consumer prices ticking back up in May to 8.6%, Federal Reserve officials are contemplating a larger-than-expected 0.75-percentage-point interest-rate increase at their meeting this week. Continued pressure on producer prices often signals future rises in consumer inflation as costs pass through supply chains.</p> <p>Elevated producer prices suggest that consumer prices “would continue to have upward pressure in the coming months,” said PNC economist Kurt Rankin. While the relationship between the two measurements is indirect, that pattern has been consistent as the economy emerges from its pandemic-induced slowdown. May’s jump in consumer inflation didn’t come as a total surprise because “PPI was telling us that this number was coming, that inflation was going to stay high in response to higher oil prices,” Mr. Rankin said.</p> <p>Consumer demand for goods and services has outpaced supply. Shortages of commodities such as wheat and precious metals, along with new restrictions on buying Russian oil, have been exacerbated by the continuing war in Ukraine. Rolling Covid-19 lockdowns in China have roiled supply chains that had begun to resolve snarls from earlier in the pandemic.</p> <p>Sustained high prices for inputs that have been in short supply because of the war and other global trade issues are unlikely to be resolved soon and have likely become baked into prices for other goods and services, economists say.</p> <p>In recent weeks, executives at food suppliers and restaurant chains have complained of rapidly rising prices for labor, packaging, ingredients and transportation. The rising cost of fuel is making it more expensive to produce and sell food. Food retailers and restaurants have said they are passing along some wholesale price increases and additional costs to consumers.</p> <p>In the early stages of the current period of inflation, many companies were able to pass higher costs along to consumers by raising prices. Analysts expect the S&P 500 net profit margin to come in at</p>

12.3% for the first quarter, above the five-year average of 11.1%, according to FactSet. But there are signs that that trend may be reaching its end.

The stock market has been jolted by high-profile examples of costs squeezing corporate earnings. Last month, [Walmart](#) Inc. said [higher product, supply-chain and employee costs](#) eroded its profit. [Target](#) Corp. shares plummeted 25% the following day after the company said [it would absorb elevated costs](#) this year instead of raising prices.

“The benign explanation from an inflation standpoint is that consumers are beginning to resist price hikes, which would be bad news for retail profitability but might signal a forthcoming cooling of inflation,” said Stephen Stanley, chief economist at Amherst Pierpont. Another explanation, he said, is that “stores misread how much they needed to raise prices to recoup their higher costs” and will continue to raise prices going forward.

Along with higher prices from suppliers, businesses are dealing with an unusually tight U.S. labor market, with demand for workers outstripping supply by nearly two job openings for every available unemployed worker. Although there are some early signs the labor market is starting to cool, [employers added 390,000 jobs last month](#) and the unemployment rate hovered near a half-century low at 3.6%. Fewer Americans are employed as a share of the population than before the pandemic, even after a run of gains that has led to the creation of 6.5 million jobs in a year.

As a measure of price pressures, the PPI differs from the Labor Department’s more widely followed [consumer-price index](#), which only measures the final prices paid directly by households for goods and services.

The PPI also includes prices paid by companies, governments, third-party payers such as insurers and buyers in other countries. The CPI, unlike the PPI, includes taxes and user charges and the prices of imported goods and services, because they are part of the [total costs paid by consumers](#).

GIST

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HEADLINE	06/14 Natural gas prices plunge after TX outage
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/natural-gas-prices-plunge-after-extended-outage-at-texas-lng-facility-11655235895?mod=hp_lista_pos3
GIST	<p>U.S. natural-gas prices plummeted after an LNG shipping facility in Texas said a fire last week would knock out the facility until late this year, greatly reducing export capacity.</p> <p>Natural-gas futures for July delivery fell more than 16% to end Tuesday at \$7.189 per million British thermal units, the latest whipsaw move in the market for the power-generation and heating fuel. Futures prices for deliveries through February shed at least 10% on the day, suggesting greatly diminished fears about shortages this coming winter.</p> <p>Natural gas has been a big driver of inflation this year, with the highest prices in years adding to the cost of heating, cooling and powering homes and businesses as well as manufacturing steel, cement, glass, plastics and fertilizer. Prices had hit \$9.60 just before the fire at the LNG plant on Wednesday, which was about triple what gas cost a year earlier. Since the fire, prices have dropped 25% from that intraday high.</p> <p>Analysts have expected prices this summer to challenge records set before the shale-drilling boom flooded the U.S. market more than a decade ago. Exports of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, have boomed, especially to Europe, where buyers are racing to replace Russian fuel. Benchmark prices in Europe rose 16% on Tuesday at a Dutch trading hub.</p> <p>The overseas demand has helped lift U.S. prices to their highest level in more than 10 years.</p>

A [fire last week](#) at Freeport LNG's facility on a Texas barrier island has reduced U.S. export capacity by about one-sixth, or some 2 billion cubic feet a day, which is roughly enough gas to power 50,000 homes for a year.

U.S. manufacturers and consumer advocates have pointed to rising LNG exports as a big reason behind budget-busting energy costs at home. "It should be alarming to federal policy makers that the Freeport LNG terminal only exports 2 billion cubic feet a day, yet it is having such a significant impact to prices," said Paul Cicio, chief executive of Industrial Energy Consumers of America, a manufacturers' association.

Traders had been waiting on news about the extent of the damage. On Tuesday, the facility's closely held owner said that the fire, which broke out among the pipes that move LNG from storage tanks to docks, caused more damage than it initially thought.

"At this time, completion of all necessary repairs and a return to full plant operations is not expected until late 2022," Freeport said Tuesday. The firm said that it aimed for a partial restart in 90 days.

That means that a lot of shale gas that had been slated to be shipped abroad will now be available to traders to sock away in domestic storage facilities for winter when furnaces are fired up and demand is highest. U.S. natural-gas inventories are nearly 15% below the five-year average for this time of year, a result of record LNG exports as well as [demand that has outpaced production](#).

The Freeport outage could go a long way toward erasing the deficit before winter, said Sheetal Nasta, analyst at consulting firm RBN Energy. "Capacity to move or displace that 2 billion cubic feet per day north and east is limited," she said. "Much of it is likely stranded in Texas and north Louisiana, and a lot of it could end up in storage."

The prospect of a better-balanced domestic market and lower prices hit shares of gas producers, which have been some of the top performing stocks in this year's otherwise down market. [Antero Resources Corp.](#) lost 11% on Tuesday, while [EQT Corp.](#), the biggest U.S. producer, fell more than 9%.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Militant indigenous uprising in Chile
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/militant-indigenous-uprising-in-chile-tests-new-leftist-leader-11655222618?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>ANGOL, Chile—Mauro Aguilar was maneuvering his truck around a turn on his way for a cargo of pine logs when gunshots ripped through his cabin, shattering his jaw.</p> <p>"In seconds, the road filled with camouflaged combatants all firing on the truck, faces covered, with helmets, bulletproof vests and heavy weapons," said Mr. Aguilar, recalling how he stopped and coughed teeth and blood into his trembling hands on that January day.</p> <p>Such attacks by heavily armed splinter groups of the Mapuche indigenous community in Chile's wooded central region have escalated in recent months, the government and witnesses say, with militants shooting at logging trucks and police stations as well as setting fire to private homes.</p> <p>The attacks—aimed at freeing Mapuche ancestral land now held by paper-pulp companies and other private enterprises—are pressuring the country's new leftist president, Gabriel Boric.</p> <p>As a candidate for office, Mr. Boric expressed ideological affinity with Mapuche activists, who reject capitalism and extractive industries, including logging. Now, three months after taking office, he finds himself under pressure to restore order in Latin America's most economically advanced country.</p> <p>"We will not tolerate the imposition of violence as a method of conflict resolution," Mr. Boric said in late May after gunmen attacked a bus carrying forestry workers, killing one.</p>

With a population of at least 1.5 million, the Mapuche are among the biggest indigenous communities in South America, living across a swath of land extending into Argentina. Most Mapuche are farmers, run small businesses or work as forestry contractors, living in more than 3,000 disparate communities, each with its own leader. But the injustices of the past—often centered on the land the Mapuche lost—gnaw at some in the community, driving a radical few to violence.

“The Mapuche want their needs to be heard, but they sometimes lack a strategy to communicate them,” said Ariel Traipi Huilipan, a Mapuche entrepreneur who heads a foundation that works with indigenous weavers. “There is anger, and when this evolves into ideology, the underlying message breaks down.”

The Mapuche repelled colonial Spain only to be pushed out of their ancestral land by the invading Chilean army and European settlers in the late 19th century, opening wounds that Mr. Boric publicly said he [came into office determined to heal](#).

Instead of what he called repressive tactics by his predecessors, Mr. Boric’s government said it would expand land transfers to the Mapuche and create an indigenous affairs ministry. A special assembly endorsed by Mr. Boric has also drafted a new constitution that, if approved in a September referendum, would give the Mapuche extensive rights.

Still, the situation has spun out of control, said Francisco Ljubetic, a former prosecutor in central Chile, explaining radical groups made up of Mapuche assailants now target people in addition to property, forcing some families to flee their homes. Police say some of the militants are exploiting historic grievances to carve out territory amid the area’s rolling green hills and pine forests for drug trafficking and other crimes.

“Today, the attacks are indiscriminate, growing in number and intensity and affecting defenseless people,” he said, adding that one government after another minimized the violence over the years. “This is a cancer that was left untreated.”

With the attacks mounting in the weeks since he was inaugurated, Mr. Boric in mid-May ordered a deployment of troops to roads in the central hot spot regions of La Araucanía and Biobío, the main Mapuche territory. That has angered his leftist urban base by undertaking measures similar to those used by predecessors.

“I have the duty to use all legal tools to guarantee the security of the population,” he said in a speech earlier this month, “and I will not waver in using them.”

The deployment of troops comes as attacks—arson, shootings, destruction of forestry equipment and land takeovers—rose from 1,118 in 2019 to 1,771 last year in four central regions of Chile, most of them in La Araucanía, the country’s Attorney General’s Office said. This year such attacks increased from 23 in January to 77 in April, said the La Araucanía Multi-Chamber, a group that represents construction, forestry, trucking and other companies in this region. This year through early June, 14 people have died violently, most of them shot indiscriminately, compared with 11 in all of 2021, said the Multi-Chamber.

Among those targeted, just days after Mr. Boric was inaugurated president in mid-March, was Interior Minister Izkia Siches. She was traveling with other officials to a remote Mapuche community to initiate talks, only to be turned back when shots were fired at her convoy. No one was hurt.

“It’s clear that in recent times we have had a rise in acts of violence on roads and we have been witnesses to cowardly attacks,” Ms. Siches later said at a public event.

Other victims of arson and shootings carried out by militants have included fellow Mapuche. The more radical Mapuche denounce fellow Mapuche who work with forestry companies as traitors to the cause, according to crude messages left at the site of attacks.

Another victim was Otto Wild, whose 2,000-acre ranch was set ablaze and destroyed in May. Militants from a radical Mapuche group are now occupying the land he and his wife have lived on since 1977, when they bought it because it reminded them of the Alps in their native Switzerland.

“My son called me at 5:30 that morning to say, ‘Papa, our house is gone.’ It was a sad way to wake up,” said Mr. Wild, who had been in a nearby town when his home went up in smoke.

He said arson attacks on his property started in 2017, when assailants burned five horses alive in their stalls, along with a workshop and a small hydroelectric plant.

“The fields are ready to plant, but in these circumstances we can’t plant, because they burn the fields and the harvest,” he said.

Mr. Boric’s military deployment has been sharply criticized by a leader of one of seven armed Mapuche groups, Hector Llaitul, who heads the Arauco Malleco Coordinador, named after two historically Mapuche provinces. He compared the tactics to those used by Augusto Pinochet, Chile’s military dictator from 1973 to 1990, whose regime cracked down on the Mapuche.

“It’s time to prepare the forces, to organize the armed resistance for autonomy,” said Mr. Llaitul, whose group started seizing private property and waging attacks in the late 1990s.

The violence frequently affects Chileans like those in the fishing village of Quidico, where tourists once flocked before the attacks drove them away. More than 70 houses were recently set on fire, police said. Quidico’s tiny fortified police station is pockmarked with bullet holes.

“I never thought this would happen to me because I was born and raised here,” said Mauricio Herrera, who was perplexed as to why his home was set on fire.

Mr. Herrera fought back tears as he stood next to the charred ruins of his home, truck and the equipment he used to clean and transport fish to Santiago. “We were left with nothing,” he said.

The Mapuche’s decades-old grievances range from discrimination to income inequality, despite the wealth generated by logging and mining companies, according to local Mapuche, anthropologists and historians. Poverty in La Araucanía reached 17.4%, compared with 10.8% for the nation, according to the 2020 census. Many Mapuche say they also lament the fading traditions of their community, where fewer than one in 10 speak the Mapuche language.

And then there are the claims on ancestral lands, which seven militant groups say they are at war with the Chilean state to take back.

Government and intelligence officials say Mapuche “extremists” exploit the cause over land as cover while they carry out crimes, from wood theft to drug trafficking.

“There are groups tied to drug-trafficking and crime that use the indigenous demands to conceal actions that are unrelated to authentic grievances,” said Natalia Caniguan, a researcher at the Center for Intercultural and Indigenous Studies in the town of Temuco.

Indeed, police say they have made cocaine busts and uncovered marijuana plants concealed among the trees in forestry plantations or at greenhouses in remote Mapuche communities. Trees belonging to lumber companies are often stolen, laundered through clandestine sawmills and sold with phony documents, forestry companies and police say. According to the forestry chamber, Corma, 4% of the 4,500 logging trucks that transit each day carry stolen wood.

Still, many Mapuche decry the violence, saying that it harms not only innocent people but the Mapuche community itself.

	“I don’t feel part of this struggle,” said Cristobal Ñancufil, a 19-year-old Mapuche who bakes bread in Temuco to save up for a veterinary degree. “Ethnic pride is good. But attacking someone’s property that long ago belonged to Mapuche, how is this the fault of the descendants?”
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HEADLINE	06/14 Heat advisories envelop 1/3rd US population
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-third-of-u-s-population-under-heat-advisories-11655244215?mod=hp_listb_pos1
GIST	<p>High temperatures enveloped a third of the U.S. population Tuesday, as wildfires in Arizona and California sparked during the heat wave there grew.</p> <p>Excessive heat watches, excessive heat warnings and heat advisories were in effect from the Upper Midwest to the Southeast, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Hot, dry conditions in the Southwest and parts of California last week moved east, with stifling temperatures recorded from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes on Monday. St. Louis broke the record set there in 1952 by one degree on Monday, at 99 degrees Fahrenheit.</p> <p>A dome of high pressure, also sometimes called a heat dome, “will generate well above-normal to record-breaking temperatures across the region” on Tuesday and Thursday, the National Weather Service said in its forecast. A heat dome occurs when the atmosphere traps hot air “like a lid or cap,” according to the weather service, creating large areas of sweltering heat.</p> <p>The hot temperatures and high humidity are expected to produce heat indexes into the triple digits in many locations.</p> <p>In the Southeast, temperatures rose to the high 90s in the majority of the region Tuesday afternoon, according to the NWS.</p> <p>Charleston, S.C., reached 95 degrees, with heat indexes between 110 and 112, according to Brittany MacNamara, a meteorologist for the NWS Charleston office.</p> <p>“We have temperatures pretty much in the mid-90s through the weekend and potentially even into early next week as well,” Ms. MacNamara said.</p> <p>Sweltering conditions were also recorded in Atlanta, with temperatures nearing 100 degrees near east central Georgia, according to Nikole Listemaa, a senior forecaster with the local Peachtree City/Atlanta office.</p> <p>Atlanta was expected Tuesday to tie its record temperature of 96 degrees, last hit in 2016, Mrs. Listemaa said. In Athens, home to the University of Georgia, the high for Tuesday was 99 degrees Fahrenheit—two degrees away from breaking an over 100-year-old record.</p> <p>The core of the weather pattern is forecast to shift back to the Southwest and Midwest later in the week. Severe thunderstorms are likely across portions of the Upper Midwest on Wednesday, while critical fire weather conditions remain across parts of the Southwest.</p> <p>During the heat wave that covered much of the Southwest over the weekend, several fires broke out near Flagstaff, Ariz. The Pipeline Fire sparked Sunday and has grown to more than 20,000 acres. Over 450 firefighters are tackling the blaze. Two other fires that began a day later near Flagstaff, the Haywire and Double Fire, combined shortly thereafter and have now burned 4,052 acres. Evacuations have been ordered in some areas close to the fire, as other communities are being told to prepare for a potential evacuation.</p>

	<p>Red flag warnings, which signal the possibility for extreme fire conditions that combine gusty winds and low relative humidity, are expected for the next 48 hours.</p> <p>In California, the Sheep Fire burning in the Angeles National Forest prompted some mandatory evacuations of sparsely populated areas. The blaze started on Saturday near the mountain town of Wrightwood, just outside the Los Angeles area.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Seattle passes police management contract
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3517576/seattle-unanimously-passes-police-management-contract-focusing-on-accountability/
GIST	<p>The Seattle City Council unanimously approved a contract between the city and the Seattle Police Management Association, which represents about 80 police lieutenants and captains, by a vote of 8-0.</p> <p>“This agreement creates a new discipline review system that marks a sea change in how discipline appeals operate,” Councilmember Lisa Herbold said during the city council meeting. “It will help slow that backlog from growing by ensuring cases aren’t being entirely relitigated during arbitration as they currently are. It will also ensure arbitrators, who are not generally experts on policing, don’t substitute their judgment for the police chief’s, undermining accountability as happened in the Adley Shepherd case.”</p> <p>The contract will establish new restrictions on arbitration, make it harder for SPD to “run out the clock” on investigations, and implement other key provisions of the city’s landmark 2017 accountability ordinance.</p> <p>Arbitration gives a police officer or commander who’s been accused of misconduct an opportunity to challenge the findings of the Office of Police Accountability to an outside investigator. This process has been at the center of several controversial cases in recent years.</p> <p>In 2018, an arbitrator reinstated former SPD officer Adley Shepherd, who was fired for punching a handcuffed woman sitting in the back of a police car. Three years later, a state judge overturned the arbitrator’s decision.</p> <p>Earlier this year, an arbitrator reinstated a parking enforcement officer after Seattle Interim Police Chief Adrian Diaz fired him for telling a coworker that he supported lynching.</p> <p>Federal Judge James Robart ordered the city to fix its arbitration process when he ruled the city partly out of compliance with the agreement in 2019.</p> <p>“You will vote today for another police union contract that allows police to investigate police and allows for the accountability failures to continue,” Howard Gale, representing seattlestop.org, said during the public comment section. He mentioned that SPD had killed 12 people over the last nine years who were experiencing a behavioral health crisis while not wielding a firearm. “One of those was Charlene Elias, the pregnant mother of four murdered five years ago this Saturday, just four weeks after Seattle’s police accountability legislation was passed. Her murder, like the 11 others under similar circumstances over the last nine years, was deemed by this accountability system to be lawful and proper.”</p> <p>“I look forward to a future of justice and not backwards to a mythical past and false promises,” Gale continued. “And for God’s sakes, do not congratulate yourselves today for living in the past when you have another police union contract that allows police to investigate police and declare every killing lawful and proper.”</p>

	<p>With the contract approved, captains and lieutenants will receive retroactive wage increases of 2.7% in 2020, 1.9% in 2021, and 4% in 2022. It is common practice for police to see retroactive increases, in part because they generally take years to negotiate. Police often operate under expired contracts.</p> <p>In 2023, police managers would receive a pay bump equivalent to the consumer price index increase, up to 4%. Overall, this will cost more than \$6 million through the end of next year.</p> <p>The SPMA contract only covers police managers, but has the potential to influence Seattle Police Officers Guild's (SPOG) negotiations. SPOG is just beginning negotiations with the city for its own contract, which expired at the end of 2020.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Snohomish Co. property values soar 32%
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3517403/snohomish-county-property-values-soar-as-housing-market-heats-up/
GIST	<p>Home values in Snohomish County are up 32% on average, according to a Jan. 1 revaluation from the county assessor's office.</p> <p>"The Assessor's Office is charged with determining the value of property in Snohomish County, and we have a team of professionals who work hard to be accurate and thorough," said Snohomish County Assessor Linda Hjelle. "We know that the housing market has been pushing ever higher and our valuations reflect that growth."</p> <p>Assessed valuations reflect real estate sales values and the Snohomish County market has been highly active. Northwest Multiple Listing Service shows a median increase in residential and condominium sales price of 27.09% from Jan. 1, 2021 to Jan. 1, 2022.</p> <p>Hjelle said she has never seen increases this high in her 33 years with the assessor's office. She also stated taxes don't necessarily increase because of higher assessed values. Taxing districts' budgets and recent voter-approved measures determine how much tax is collected.</p> <p>"I'm trying to reassure people they are not going to see a 30 to 40% increase in their taxes because the value has increased that much," she said.</p> <p>In 2021, there was an 11% increase in home values on average and a 7% increase in taxes, or an extra \$331, according to the assessor's office.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 US readying new weapons for Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/88q943/us-weapons-ukraine-russia
GIST	<p>The Pentagon says it expects to send new weapons systems to help the Ukrainian military in its fight to stop the steady advance of Russian forces in the eastern part of the country.</p> <p>A senior U.S. defense official said that new weapons systems like long-range missiles and artillery cannons are urgently needed in Ukraine, in a government release. The news comes as fears grow that Russia may soon win the battle for Donbas in the east of Ukraine where fighting is focused, which could signal the Kremlin still intends to conquer the entire country and dismantle Ukrainian statehood.</p> <p>"The focus is first and foremost on Ukraine's urgent requirements to continue the battle, that it's fighting against Russia right now," said the official on the eve of a meeting in Belgium of 50 national heads of defense departments, led by U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III. "It is an artillery battle now."</p> <p>The Ukraine Defense Contact Group, which first convened in April while the war looked much different than the trench and artillery duels happening now in Donbas, will determine what coordinated weapons transfers Ukrainian forces need. Earlier weapons handed over to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government included shoulder-fired hardware like Stinger anti-aircraft systems and anti-tank Javelin</p>

rockets—used to devastating effect by the much smaller Ukrainian resistance to halt and repel Russian forces.

But in the current state of the war, Russian military brass has seemingly learned from its mistakes and changed tactics. Instead of scattered deployments of troops and tanks across the country, Kremlin forces are using long-range artillery to blast Ukrainian towns like Severodonetsk from a distance, while incrementally deploying ground forces that consume ground by the day as supplies and logistics freely flow from western Russia into Russian-controlled Donbas.

To that point, the U.S. defense official said the new weapons shipments will need to focus on “artillery, armor, [unmanned aerial vehicles] and sustainment,” with an eye to urgently ship multiple long-range rocket systems (MLRS). Those systems will allow Ukrainian forces, who currently don’t possess enough of the types of arms required to hit far-away Russian artillery, to return fire “from further back.” In late May, the Pentagon confirmed that the U.S. would [provide Ukraine with MLRS capabilities](#) as long as it promised not to fire them into Russian territory.

On Monday, one of Zelenskyy’s chief advisers tweeted a “straightforward” list of all the military gear the country needs to win the war against Russia, which included 1,000 new artillery cannons (and much needed ammunition) in addition to 300 MLRS and other heavy arms. Ukraine has also admitted that the war is costing the country dearly in manpower as 150-200 soldiers are dying daily as the country claims it is [outgunned by Russian artillery 20-to-one](#).

At a [national security conference in Washington Tuesday](#), the U.S. undersecretary of defense for policy Colin Kahl said that while those numbers are grim, Russian forces are also dying at a similar rate.

“The Ukrainians remain stalwart defenders,” said Kahl. “There are significant casualties, but that is true on both sides.”

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HEADLINE	06/14 Pope: Ukraine war ‘somehow provoked’
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/pope-francis-ukraine-war-provoked-russian-troops
GIST	<p>Pope Francis has said Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine was “perhaps somehow provoked” as he recalled a conversation in the run-up to the war in which he was warned Nato was “barking at the gates of Russia”.</p> <p>In an interview with the Jesuit magazine La Civiltà Cattolica, conducted last month and published on Tuesday, the pontiff condemned the “ferocity and cruelty of the Russian troops” while warning against what he said was a fairytale perception of the conflict as good versus evil.</p> <p>“We need to move away from the usual Little Red Riding Hood pattern, in that Little Red Riding Hood was good and the wolf was the bad one,” he said. “Something global is emerging and the elements are very much entwined.”</p> <p>Francis added that a couple of months before the war he met a head of state, who he did not identify but described as “a wise man who speaks little, a very wise man indeed ... He told me that he was very worried about how Nato was moving. I asked him why, and he replied: ‘They are barking at the gates of Russia. They don’t understand that the Russians are imperial and can’t have any foreign power getting close to them.’”</p> <p>He added: “We do not see the whole drama unfolding behind this war, which was, perhaps, somehow either provoked or not prevented.”</p> <p>Shortly before the invasion, Vladimir Putin had demanded Nato rule out allowing Ukraine, which borders Russia, into the military alliance.</p>

	<p>The pope said he was not “pro-Putin” and that it would be “simplistic and wrong to say such a thing”. He also said Russia had “miscalculated” the war. “It is also true that the Russians thought it would all be over in a week. They encountered a brave people, a people who are struggling to survive and who have a history of struggle.”</p> <p>On Tuesday morning, the pontiff published a message saying the invasion of Ukraine was a violation of a country’s right to self-determination.</p> <p>“The war in Ukraine has now been added to the regional wars that for years have taken a heavy toll of death and destruction,” he said in a message for the Roman Catholic church’s World Day of the Poor, which will be marked in November. “Yet here the situation is even more complex due to the direct intervention of a ‘superpower’ aimed at imposing its own will in violation of the principle of the self-determination of peoples.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, he told La Civiltà Cattolica that he hoped to meet the Russian Orthodox patriarch, Kirill, a close ally of Putin who supports the war in Ukraine, at an interreligious event in Kazakhstan in September.</p> <p>Kirill scolded Francis after the pontiff urged him not to become the Kremlin’s “altar boy” in an interview with the Corriere della Sera newspaper. Kirill accused the pope of choosing an “incorrect tone” to convey his message, adding that such remarks would damage dialogue between the two churches.</p> <p>The pair had been due to meet in Jerusalem in June but the trip was cancelled due to the war.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 Europe’s unity over Ukraine war at risk
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/justice-for-ukraine-overshadowed-by-cost-of-living-concerns-study-shows
GIST	<p>Europe’s unity over the war in Ukraine is at risk as public attention increasingly shifts from the battlefield to cost of living concerns, polling across 10 European countries suggests, with the divide deepening between voters who want a swift end to the conflict and those who want Russia punished.</p> <p>The survey in nine EU member states – Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden – plus the UK found support for Ukraine remained high, but that preoccupations have shifted to the conflict’s wider impacts.</p> <p>“Europeans had surprised Putin – and themselves – by their unity so far, but the big stresses are coming now,” said Mark Leonard, a co-author of a report by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) on changing attitudes to Russia’s invasion.</p> <p>Governments’ ability to retain public support for potentially harmful policies would be crucial, Leonard said, warning that the gulf between the “peace” and “justice” camps could be “as damaging as that between creditors and debtors during the euro crisis”.</p> <p>The survey found that despite strong support across Europe for Ukraine’s bid to join the EU and the west’s policy of severing ties with Moscow, many voters in Europe want the war to end as soon as possible – even if that means Ukraine losing territory.</p> <p>That view often did not reflect the position of national governments, the authors said, cautioning EU leaders against “maximalist positions” over the war and suggesting they remain tough on Russia but cautious about the dangers of escalation.</p> <p>“In the early stages of the war, countries in central and eastern Europe felt vindicated in their hawkishness towards Russia,” write Leonard and his co-author Ivan Krastev. “But in the next phase countries such as Poland could find themselves marginalised if the ‘peace’ camp broadens its appeal among the other member states.”</p>

The polling, carried out between 28 April and 11 May, found near-universal support for Ukraine, with 73% of respondents across the 10 countries blaming Russia for the war.

More than 80% in Poland, Sweden, the UK (83%) and Finland (90%) said they held Russia responsible, along with strong majorities in Italy (56%), France (62%) and Germany (66%), while majorities or pluralities also saw Russia as the main block to peace.

There was strong support for cutting links with Russia. A majority across the 10 countries felt governments should sever economic and cultural relations with Moscow, with most – rising to 71% in Poland – also favouring an end to diplomatic ties.

Similarly, 58% across the 10 countries – rising to 77% in Finland – wanted the EU to reduce its dependence on Russian energy, even at the expense of the bloc’s climate goals, suggesting public support for a new round of EU sanctions, including on oil.

But ECFR’s polling showed a clear divide between Europeans who want peace as soon as possible (35% across the 10 countries), and those who want justice – defined as restoring Ukraine’s territorial integrity and holding Russia to account (22%).

A third “swing” group, who share the anti-Russian feelings of justice supporters but also the peace camp’s fears of escalation, accounted for about 20% of voters, the report found – with major distribution differences between countries.

The peace camp – whose backers also tended to believe Ukraine would be worse off than Russia at the end of the conflict – was most strongly supported in Italy (52%), the polling found, while Poland had the biggest justice camp, at 41%.

Crucially, views on the EU’s policy response to the invasion varied depending on which camp respondents were in, with justice voters backing the severance of economic, diplomatic and cultural ties, and peace voters supporting only the first of these.

Asked what worried them most about the war, respondents in Germany, Italy and France were most concerned about the cost of living and energy prices, while respondents in Sweden, the UK and Poland were most concerned about the threat of nuclear war.

As the conflict drags on and costs grow, governments will increasingly be forced to “balance the pursuit of European unity with opinions that diverge both within and among member states”, the authors write, pointing to a “growing gap between the positions of many governments and the public mood in their respective countries”.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Severodonetsk evacuations continue
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/sieverodonetsk-evacuation-continues-despite-loss-of-main-bridges
GIST	<p>Ukrainian authorities say they are continuing to evacuate civilians from Sievierodonetsk during every “quiet” moment, after the three main bridges out of the eastern city were destroyed by Russian shelling.</p> <p>As fighting raged on for control of the city, local authorities said they still had ways to evacuate people, though it was not immediately clear what route the Ukrainian military was using.</p> <p>“The ways to connect with the city are quite difficult, but they exist,” Oleksandr Struik, the head of the Sievierodonetsk military administration, told Ukrainian television, adding that evacuations were taking place “every minute when it is quiet there, or there is a possibility of transportation”.</p>

“Russian troops are trying to storm the city, but the military is holding firm,” he added. Russia is believed to control about 70% of the city.

Struik said about 500 civilians continued to shelter in the city’s Azot chemical plant, where it is feared a scenario similar to that in the southern port city of Mariupol, where hundreds of people were trapped for weeks in the Azovstal steelworks, could play out.

A senior Russian commander said that Russian forces were ready to open up a humanitarian corridor on Wednesday morning to evacuate civilians from the Azot plant to Svatove, a city north of Sievierodonetsk controlled by pro-Russian forces.

Col Gen Mikhail Mizintsev, the officer who was in charge of the devastating siege of Mariupol, said Ukraine asked the Russian side to help organise a humanitarian corridor to Lysychansk, a neighbouring city controlled by Ukraine on the other side of the Siverskyi Donetsk River from Sievierodonetsk, but that Russia’s defence ministry regarded Ukraine’s request as an attempt to save its encircled units.

Fighters should “stop their senseless resistance and lay down arms” from 8am Moscow time (5am GMT), Mizintsev told the Interfax news agency late on Tuesday.

Ukraine has not yet commented on the reported humanitarian corridor. It has previously accused Russia of violating ceasefire agreements.

The Russian army has shifted the bulk of its military efforts to capturing Sievierodonetsk in its attempt to take full control of Luhansk and Donetsk, collectively known as Donbas. Serhiy Haidai, the governor of the Luhansk, told Ukrainian television on Tuesday that two more Russian battalion tactical groups had been moved into the area.

The fight for Sievierodonetsk is turning into one of the war’s bloodiest battles and is seen as a potential turning point in Russia’s advances in the Donbas.

During his nightly address on Monday, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said: “We are dealing with absolute evil. And we have no choice but to move forward and free our territory. The human cost of this battle is very high for us. It is simply terrifying.”

Several Ukrainian officials have called on the west to supply Ukraine with heavier weapons while the country’s commander in chief, Valery Zaluzhnyi, said Russian forces had a tenfold advantage in firepower.

Capturing Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk would give Russia full control over Luhansk as well as the possibility to focus its offensive on Donetsk. In a briefing on Monday, the Ukrainian military said Russian forces were “creating conditions” for offensives on the cities of Sloviansk, Lyman, Yampil and Siversk in Donetsk.

Pro-Russian separatists and Russian news agencies reported that several Ukrainian artillery strikes on Donetsk city – which Russia controls – killed a child and injured several others.

Answering a question from Danish journalists on Tuesday, Zelenskiy said Ukraine “wasn’t interested” in targeting Russian civilians. “We are not terrorists to shell civilian areas. We are normal, healthy people.”

Zelenskiy said the Ukrainian military had enough ammunition and weapons but needed more long-range weapons. “What we don’t have enough of are the weapons that really hits the range that we need to reduce the advantage of the Russian Federation’s equipment.”

Pointing to the alleged strikes on Donetsk city, Denis Pushilin, the leader of the self-proclaimed republic in Donetsk, said the proxy state would turn to Russia for more military help. Asked about Pushilin’s

request, the Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, told journalists that the “protection” of the two breakaway republics was the main goal of Russia’s “special military operation”.

In the same call with journalists, Peskov said British authorities had not contacted Moscow regarding the fate of Aiden Aslin and Shaun Pinner who, along with Moroccan national Saoudun Brahim, were sentenced to death last week for “mercenary activities” by the court of the self-declared Donetsk republic.

“They should address the authorities of the country that pronounced the sentences, and that is not the Russian Federation,” Peskov said, adding he was “sure” the Russian-backed separatist officials in Donbas would be willing to listen to an appeal from Britain.

The British foreign secretary, Liz Truss, on Tuesday said she would do “whatever was necessary” to secure the release of the two British nationals who have been sentenced to death in what international human rights groups have called a “show trial” designed to exert pressure on the UK.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Hong Kong books: ‘never a British colony’
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/new-hong-kong-textbooks-will-claim-city-never-was-a-british-colony
GIST	<p>New Hong Kong textbooks will teach students that the city was never a British colony, after an overhaul of a school subject that authorities have blamed for driving the pro-democracy protests.</p> <p>According to local reports, the new texts will teach students that the Chinese government didn’t recognise the treaties that ceded the city to Britain after the opium wars. They ended in 1997 when Britain returned Hong Kong to Chinese control, and therefore the texts claim Hong Kong was never a British colony.</p> <p>The new books also adopt Beijing’s narrative that the 2019 protest movement was driven by “external forces”, South China Morning Post reported.</p> <p>The four sets of textbooks for Hong Kong’s liberal studies subject were released online last week, for schools to choose materials for the new academic year in September. They are set to be used by fourth form students in “citizenship and social development” classes, which replaced the liberal studies course designed in 2009 to teach students critical thinking. In 2020 the liberal studies course was attacked by pro-Beijing authorities who blamed it for driving youth towards protests and pledged rectification.</p> <p>The then chief executive, Carrie Lam, said students needed protection from being “poisoned” and fed “false and biased information”.</p> <p>A subsequent overhaul of the education system included an increased focus on national security and patriotism, with teachers encouraged to report students who breached the national security law.</p> <p>“It is necessary for schools to teach students to think positively and to love their nation,” the head of Hong Kong’s education department said on Monday.</p> <p>Several of the textbooks discuss the 2020 national security law – widely criticised as infringing on basic freedoms by outlawing acts of dissent as terrorism, secessionism, foreign collusion or sedition. One reportedly says the law was introduced in response to “violent terrorist activities” and illegal acts in 2019 which endangered national sovereignty and security.</p> <p>Another mentioned “national security” 400 times across 121 pages, the report said.</p> <p>China’s state-backed tabloid, the Global Times, said the changes would ensure “some teachers will no longer be able to convey their wrong and poisonous political views to students when teaching this course”.</p>

	<p>Tang Fei, an editor and reviewer of two of the textbooks, and also a Hong Kong legislator, told the outlet the texts had passed internal review and were now awaiting final approval. With the new texts “there will be no need for school teachers to bring in too much other content”, Tang said.</p> <p>The proposed new textbooks come just weeks before Hong Kong marks 25 years since the British handover. The territory was promised 50 years of semi-autonomy, but activists argue the post-2019 crackdown, national security law, electoral changes, and growing central government interventions in civil society and the media have in effect ended that autonomy already.</p> <p>This year’s anniversary on 1 July will also mark the first day in office for the city’s new Beijing-anointed leader John Lee. Lee, the former security chief, will take over from Lam.</p> <p>China’s senior leaders have traditionally attended the swearing-in ceremony. Xi Jinping’s attendance has not been confirmed but speculation increased after at least one Hong Kong primary school announced it was looking for pupils to spend a week in hotel quarantine, suggesting preparations for a strict “closed-loop” system will allow Xi to visit.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 NY court rules zoo elephant is not a person
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/jun/14/elephant-person-human-animal-rights-happy
GIST	<p>New York’s top court has ruled that Happy, an elephant residing at the Bronx Zoo since the 1970s, cannot legally be considered a person in a closely watched case that tested the boundaries of applying human rights to animals.</p> <p>The case brought by an animal rights group argued Happy should be released from the zoo. The Nonhuman Rights Project argued that Happy is an autonomous, cognitively complex elephant worthy of the right reserved in law for “a person”.</p> <p>The zoo and its supporters warned that a win for the Nonhuman Rights Project could open the door to more legal actions on behalf of animals, including pets, farm animals and other species in zoos.</p> <p>The state court of appeals ruled on Tuesday 5-2, with a decision written by Chief Judge Janet DiFiore echoing that point. “While no one disputes that elephants are intelligent beings deserving of proper care and compassion”, a writ of habeas corpus was intended to protect the liberty of human beings and did not apply to a nonhuman animal like Happy, said DiFiore.</p> <p>Happy was born in the wild in Asia in the early 1970s, captured and brought as a one-year-old to the US. She arrived at the Bronx Zoo in 1977 with Grumpy, a fellow elephant who was fatally injured in a 2002 confrontation with two other elephants.</p> <p>The decision affirms a lower court ruling and means Happy will not be released to a more spacious sanctuary through a habeas corpus proceeding, which is a way for people to challenge illegal confinement.</p> <p>Extending that right to Happy to challenge her confinement at a zoo “would have an enormous destabilizing impact on modern society”. And granting legal personhood in a case like this would affect how humans interact with animals, according to the majority decision.</p> <p>“Indeed, followed to its logical conclusion, such a determination would call into question the very premises underlying pet ownership, the use of service animals, and the enlistment of animals in other forms of work,” read the decision.</p> <p>Operators of the Bronx Zoo argued Happy is neither illegally imprisoned nor a person, but a well-cared-for elephant “respected as the magnificent creature she is”.</p>

Two judges, Rowan Wilson and Jenny Rivera, wrote separate, sharply worded dissents saying the fact that Happy is an animal does not prevent her from having legal rights. Rivera wrote that Happy was being held in “an environment that is unnatural to her and that does not allow her to live her life”.

“Her captivity is inherently unjust and inhumane. It is an affront to a civilized society, and every day she remains a captive – a spectacle for humans – we, too, are diminished,” Rivera wrote.

The ruling from New York’s highest court cannot be appealed. The Nonhuman Rights Project has failed to prevail in similar cases, including those involving a chimpanzee in upstate New York named Tommy.

Steven Wise, the group’s founder, said he was pleased it managed to persuade some of the judges. He noted that the group had a similar case under way in California and more planned in other states and other countries.

“We will take a really close look at why we lost and we’ll try to make sure that that doesn’t happen again to the extent that we can,” he said.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Africa forgo gas exploration for climate?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/14/africa-gas-exploration-climate-disaster-un-reserves
GIST	<p>Africa must embrace renewable energy, and forgo exploration of its potentially lucrative gas deposits to stave off climate disaster and bring access to clean energy to the hundreds of millions who lack it, leading experts on the continent have said.</p> <p>Their call came as the UN secretary general, António Guterres, warned that exploring for gas and oil anywhere in the world would be “delusional”.</p> <p>Several African leaders are considering pushing for new investment in exploration as gas prices around the world soar. Some European countries are also eager to provide such investment to replace supplies from Russia.</p> <p>Last week, Mary Robinson, a former president of Ireland, UN commissioner for human rights and UN climate envoy, stoked controversy when she backed an expansion, saying African countries should exploit their gas reserves.</p> <p>She said the gas should be used within the continent for clean cooking and power generation for the 600 million people who lacked access to power and the 900 million who were cooking on biomass or dirty oil, rather than exported for profit.</p> <p>Mohamed Adow, the director of the Power Shift Africa thinktank and 2020 winner of the Climate Breakthrough prize, said Robinson was wrong.</p> <p>“For Africans to achieve the lives of dignity that energy access should bring, we cannot rely on the failed system of the last 200 years. We must leapfrog our thinking and make the investment into distributed renewable energy systems that won’t poison our rivers, pollute our air, choke our lungs and profit only a few,” he told the Guardian.</p> <p>Making a distinction between voices from the west and those from Africa, he said: “Climate justice champions who actually live in Africa are very clear that we want access to energy for everyone – but equally we do not want to lock in climate catastrophe for everyone.”</p> <p>He was joined by Nnimmo Bassey, the director of the Health of Mother Earth Foundation in Nigeria. “Decades of oil and gas extraction on the continent has fed foreign markets and only muddied the water, built violence, and left the people in the cold and in the dark,” he said, highlighting the experience of</p>

Nigeria, the Niger Delta and Mozambique, characterised by [pollution](#) and profiteering by a few while [local people remained impoverished](#).

He accused political leaders of ignoring these concerns: “Sadly, African politicians acting as middlemen to transnational corporations are happy to parrot this song despite local resistance and the realities of ecocide in the fossil fuel fields.”

Omar Elmawi, a coordinator at the StopEACOP campaign in east Africa, said: “Decades after exploiting fossil fuels in Africa, we have yet to improve energy poverty and countries have continued to drown themselves in unsustainable loans taken because of the promise of fossil fuel revenues.

“Corporations registered in the global north have continued to benefit from these dirty fossil fuels in Africa and all we are left with are the impacts on our people, nature and the climate.”

The issue of gas in Africa is likely to prove a flashpoint at the [Cop27 UN climate summit](#) this November in Egypt. Robinson’s views, [first expressed in an interview with the Guardian](#), sparked a row at [UN climate talks in Bonn](#), where countries have held meetings over the past fortnight in preparatory negotiations for Cop27.

Several African countries are thought to want to use Cop27 to argue for the continent to be allowed to exploit its gas, taking advantage of the [fossil fuel bonanza](#) that has followed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Egypt is sympathetic, with the finance minister, Mohamed Maait, telling an audience in the City of London recently that poor countries [must not be “punished”](#).

However, Guterres made clear in a speech on Tuesday morning at the Austrian World Summit in Vienna that [no new fossil fuels](#) should receive investment.

He said: “New funding for fossil fuel exploration and production infrastructure is delusional. It will only further feed the scourge of war, pollution and climate catastrophe. The only true path to energy security, stable power prices, prosperity and a liveable planet lies in abandoning polluting fossil fuels, especially coal, and accelerating the renewables-based energy transition.”

He did not refer to Africa specifically but indicated the continent was included, by adding: “Renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century. Cheaper, more reliable and fairer energy options are already available in the shape of wind and solar. This is true for all regions.”

He called for a tripling of investment in renewables, the removal of red tape that blocked wind and solar projects and for more of the underlying technology to be made available for use in poor countries through the sharing of intellectual property known as technology transfer.

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HEADLINE	06/14 New UK Covid wave driven by BA.4, BA.5
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/uk-at-start-of-new-covid-wave-driven-by-ba4-and-ba5-new-data-suggests
GIST	<p>If you thought Covid-19 was dead and gone, think again. Early signs indicate that the UK may be at the start of a new wave of Covid infections driven by BA.4 and BA.5 – while new data suggests these variants may have evolved to refavour infecting lung tissue, which could make them more dangerous.</p> <p>So what can we expect in the coming weeks and months?</p> <p>Although BA.2 continues to account for the bulk of UK infections, data from the Office for National Statistics up to 2 June suggests that Covid cases may be starting to rise again in England and Northern Ireland, driven by an increase in BA.4 and BA.5 infections. The trends were uncertain in Wales and Scotland.</p>

Also gaining ground in the UK are BA.5.1 (a child of BA.5), and the BA.2.12.1 subvariant (the USA's dominant Covid strain), which the UK Health Security Agency is monitoring.

BA.4 and BA.5 were officially designated variants of concern (VOC) in the UK on 20 May, having first been detected in South Africa during January and February of this year.

According to the latest ONS data, about one in 70 people in England were estimated to have Covid in the week leading up to 2 June. In Northern Ireland it was about one in 65, in Wales about one in 75 and in Scotland about one in 40.

In South Africa, BA.4 and BA.5 have been responsible for a second wave of Omicron infections beginning at the start of May, which now appears to be flattening off. However, South Africa wasn't hit by the highly transmissible BA.2 variant in the same way the UK was, and scientists had hoped that high levels of immunity from recent infection with BA.2 and booster vaccines might be enough to prevent these newer variants from gaining a significant foothold here.

However, with immunity from third vaccine doses waning in most population groups, and only the over-75s, and extremely vulnerable groups having been offered "spring booster" doses, this cannot be guaranteed. Neither is recent infection with the BA.1 or BA.2 Omicron variants necessarily protection against reinfection with BA.4 or BA.5.

According to research published in Science on Tuesday, natural infection with Omicron doesn't produce a strong immune response, regardless of whether scientists look at antibodies or T-cells – meaning that people who have already recovered from an Omicron infection can quickly become reinfected. The findings, from Prof Danny Altmann at Imperial College London and colleagues, may help to explain why infection levels have remained high in countries such as the UK, despite so many already having been infected with it.

According to preliminary data from Kei Sato at the University of Tokyo and colleagues, BA.4, BA.5 and BA.2.12.1 may have evolved to refavour infection of lung cells, rather than upper respiratory tract tissue – making them more similar to earlier variants, such as Alpha or Delta. The propensity of earlier Omicron variants to prefer infecting non-lung tissue may be one reason why infections tend to be milder in most people.

"It looks as though these things are switching back to the more dangerous form of infection, so going lower down in the lung," Dr Stephen Griffin, a virologist at the University of Leeds, said.

Sato's experiments indicate that BA.4, BA.5 and BA.2.12.1 replicate more efficiently in human lung cells than BA.2, while further experiments in hamsters suggest that BA.4 and BA.5 may cause more severe disease.

These variants also appear to have a higher reproduction number than BA.2, while further experiments by Sato's lab indicate that BA.4 and BA.5 may be resistant to immunity induced by earlier Omicron infections (similar to Altmann's findings).

"Altogether, our investigations suggest that the risk of [these] Omicron variants, particularly BA.4 and BA.5, to global health is potentially greater than that of original BA.2," Sato said.

It also put paid to the idea that the virus is on the verge of merely turning into common cold. "It clearly isn't, and there's no pressure on it to do that, really," said Griffin.

Even so, the rise of BA.4/5 and other subvariants by no means puts us back to square one. The UK's population is, by and large, highly vaccinated, and previous infection with other variants will also count for something. Those who haven't been vaccinated remain vulnerable, however.

Prof Tulio de Oliveira, the director of the Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, pointed out that the BA.4/5 wave has been less deadly than any of the previous waves to have hit his country. In part, this could be because hospital Covid wards were largely empty when it started, but it is also probably the result of high levels of population immunity.

However, hospitalisations and deaths are only part of the picture. Long Covid cases continue to rise in the UK. According to the latest ONS data, 2 million people in the UK are thought to be living with long Covid – the highest figure since official surveys began.

So, what to do about it? Data on the efficacy of boosters against these newer subvariants is still lacking, but if previous experience is anything to go by, they are likely to largely reinstate immune protection – at least against hospitalisation and death. A fourth dose is expected to be offered to the over-65s, frontline health and social care workers, care home residents and staff, and clinically vulnerable people from the autumn.

With luck, BA.4 and BA.5 will present just a minor blip in the UK's transition out of the Covid crisis. But their emergence is a reminder that smooth sailing is by no means guaranteed.

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HEADLINE	06/15 Sri Lanka: govt. workers should grow food
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/sri-lanka-government-workers-get-fridays-off-to-grow-food-as-shortages-loom
GIST	<p>Sri Lanka is asking government workers to take an extra day off each week to grow crops in their back yards in a bid to forestall a looming food shortage.</p> <p>An unprecedented economic downturn has left several staple foods in short supply, along with petrol and medicines, and high inflation is ravaging household budgets.</p> <p>“It seems appropriate to grant government officials leave for one working day of the week and provide them with the necessary facilities to engage in agricultural activities in their backyards,” said a cabinet statement.</p> <p>The extra day off would be a “solution to the food shortage that is expected to occur in the future”, the statement read, adding that cutting down on civil servant commutes would also help reduce fuel consumption.</p> <p>The United Nations has warned that Sri Lanka faces a “dire humanitarian crisis”, and said four out of five people in the country of 22 million were forced to skip meals.</p> <p>Motorists, meanwhile, have suffered through months of petrol and diesel shortages, and long queues of vehicles outside filling stations are a regular sight.</p> <p>Public employees will have every Friday off for the next three months without a pay cut, according to the cabinet decision, but the arrangement will not apply to essential services staff.</p> <p>The government said any of its 1.5 million public sector workers who wanted to travel abroad to find work would be given up to five years of unpaid leave without affecting their seniority or pension.</p> <p>The move is aimed at encouraging more people to get foreign jobs and send money back to the island, which is labouring under a critical shortage of foreign currency to buy imports.</p> <p>Sri Lanka has defaulted on its \$51bn foreign debt and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout.</p>

	<p>Public protests have demanded the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over mismanagement of the economy and the severe hardships people face.</p> <p>Rajapaksa introduced sweeping tax cuts soon after coming to power in November that have been blamed for leaving the island without the means to pay for essential imports.</p> <p>The cash shortfall was worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, which savaged the tourism industry and cut remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Turkey threatens to stall NATO expansion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/turkey-threatens-years-delay-to-swedish-and-finnish-entry-to-nato
GIST	<p>Turkey has said it is willing to delay Swedish and Finnish membership of Nato for more than a year unless it receives satisfactory assurances that the two Nordic countries are willing to address support for Kurdish groups it regards as terrorist organisations.</p> <p>Finland's prime minister said on Tuesday that the two nations' Nato applications could stall if the issue is not resolved before a vital Nato summit due to start in Madrid on 29 June.</p> <p>Turkey accuses Sweden and Finland of harbouring alleged members of the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK) and also objects to their decisions in 2019 to ban arms exports to Ankara due to Turkey's military operations in Syria.</p> <p>Turkey has gone on a public diplomacy offensive to highlight Swedish support for Kurdish groups in northern Syria that it links to the PKK – designated as a terrorist organisation in the EU, US and Turkey – and is planning to stage a fringe meeting on the issue at the Nato summit.</p> <p>“This is a matter of vital national interest, and we are prepared to prevent their membership for as long as a year if necessary,” said Akif Çağatay Kılıç, an MP for the ruling Justice and Development party (AKP) and chair of the Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee. “Turkey is the second largest army in Nato and has been providing the drones that help Ukraine defend itself. We deserve greater respect.”</p> <p>He said Turkey respected its own duties and responsibilities to the alliance. “What are [Sweden and Finland] going to do? They have been harbouring terrorist organisations that kill my people, disrespect my borders, pose an existential threat to my country. The only thing we demand is that there are no distinctions. A terrorist organisation is a terrorist organisation.”</p> <p>He denied the crisis was an attempt to fan nationalist flames before difficult elections, saying the non-Kurdish opposition parties were supportive of the stance of the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. He also said there was no attempt to barter with the US over arms deals.</p> <p>During a visit to Sweden on Tuesday, Finland's prime minister, Sanna Marin, warned: “If we don't solve these issues before [the] Madrid [summit], there is a risk that the situation will freeze.</p> <p>“We don't know for how long but it might freeze for a while.”</p> <p>Jens Stoltenberg, the Nato secretary general, has praised Swedish efforts to address Turkey's concerns, but seems to have recognised that plans for a fast-track membership may now be disappearing.</p> <p>The Swedish prime minister, Magdalena Andersson, is due to attend the summit, which may end up being a show of division as much as it is concerned with long-term strategic thinking and enlargement. Privately, western officials admit that Germany, France and the US are not keen to have Ukraine dominate the summit, although it is hard to imagine Nato support for Kyiv not being the central issue.</p>

On Friday Sweden tried to mollify Turkey by publishing a foreign policy paper that highlighted the need to fight terrorism, and opened a path for Sweden to resume arms export sales to Turkey. Sweden imposed restrictions on arms sales in 2019 after Turkey's invasion of northern Syria. Britain has already lifted the sales ban.

The policy paper said Sweden would "contribute to all of Nato's security including that of Turkey". A tougher anti-terrorism law, due to come into force on 1 July, gives the Swedish intelligence services greater latitude to monitor communications of suspected terrorist sympathisers.

Although Turkish demands can vary, officials have said they want to see specific Kurdish activists deported to Turkey, as well as the sacking of the Swedish defence minister, Peter Hultqvist, over a 2011 meeting with the PKK, which has been designated as a terrorist organisation in Sweden since 1984.

Ankara would like the two countries to sever ties with the US-backed Syrian Kurdish autonomous administration, which Turkey says has a synonymous leadership to the PKK.

Andersson's room for manoeuvre is limited, in that she is not going to transform Swedish extradition laws simply to satisfy the threats coming from the Turkish president, and last week she had to rely on the support of a Kurdish Swedish MP and former peshmerga fighter, Amineh Kakabaveh, to survive a narrow confidence vote. The MP says she received unspecified guarantees in return for her vote.

Sweden is home to 100,000 Kurdish refugees.

Turkish diplomats resent suggestions that it did not make its objections to Swedish membership earlier or that it is being hypocritical about the Kurdish issue due to its support for extremist groups elsewhere in the Middle East.

Finland has fewer problems with Turkey, but has said it is unlikely to press ahead with a membership request without Sweden.

Finnish media reported that the country received 10 Turkey-related extradition requests between 2019 and 2022. It granted two of those requests and is processing seven.

While Britain has strong diplomatic ties with Turkey, it has also given security assurances to the two Nordic countries during the potentially dangerous grey period between their application to join Nato and the moment when full membership gives them the alliance's collective defence protection.

In an effort to find a resolution, the UK's Europe minister, James Cleverly, is in Turkey this week to meet ministers. Angus Lapsley, the director for Euro-Atlantic security at the Foreign Office, said the UK was working night and day to try to resolve the dispute.

Stoltenberg has said the Madrid summit was never a deadline.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Myanmar junta deliberately targets children
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/myanmar-junta-accused-of-relentless-attacks-on-children
GIST	<p>Scores of children have been killed in Myanmar since last year's coup, not just in the crossfire of conflict but as deliberate targets of a military willing to inflict immense suffering, a United Nations expert has said.</p> <p>Minors had been beaten and stabbed and had fingernails or teeth removed during interrogation, while some were made to endure mock executions, according to a report published on Tuesday from the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews.</p> <p>The junta has repeatedly scolded the UN and western countries for interference and rejected allegations it is carrying out atrocities. A military spokesman could not be reached for comment on Tuesday.</p>

	<p>Based on contributions from UN agencies, humanitarian and human rights groups and civil society organisations, the report said 250,000 children were displaced by fighting, and at the least 382 killed or maimed, including by air strikes or heavy artillery.</p> <p>“The junta’s relentless attacks on children underscore the generals’ depravity and willingness to inflict immense suffering on innocent victims in its attempt to subjugate the people,” Andrews said in a statement.</p> <p>“The junta’s attacks on children constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes.”</p> <p>Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military seized power early last year and launched a fierce crackdown on its opponents, prompting a backlash by newly formed resistance groups.</p> <p>The UN had received information of 142 children being tortured by soldiers, police and pro-army militias, the report by Andrews said, while there were anecdotal reports of an increase in child labour recruitment, including by anti-junta fighters.</p> <p>Andrews said the world should take coordinated action to isolate the junta financially and commit to a “dramatic increase” in humanitarian assistance.</p> <p>He said UN members “must respond to the crisis in Myanmar with the same urgency they have responded to the crisis in Ukraine”.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Unexplained hepatitis not more common?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/science/hepatitis-us-children-covid.html
GIST	<p>Unexplained hepatitis does not appear to have become more common among American children than it was before the Covid-19 pandemic began, according to a new review of three large medical databases by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The results are part of an ongoing investigation into a puzzling cluster of cases of severe hepatitis, or liver inflammation, in previously healthy children, which date back to October 2021. As of May 26, 650 probable cases had been reported in 33 countries, according to the World Health Organization. Although the cases are extremely rare, they can be severe, resulting in liver transplants or death.</p> <p>Hepatitis has a wide variety of causes, including the hepatitis A through E viruses, toxins, and certain medications. In the recent cluster of cases, however, many of these common causes have been ruled out.</p> <p>Researchers have been investigating a range of potential explanations, including the possibility that the cases might be linked to the pandemic or caused by an infection with an adenovirus, one of a family of common viruses that typically cause cold- and flu-like symptoms and have been detected in many of the affected children. (It is also possible that the two factors are working in concert. A previous coronavirus infection might leave children more vulnerable to a subsequent adenovirus infection, for instance.)</p> <p>Officials have also been trying to determine whether the cases represent a new phenomenon or are simply a new recognition of one that has long existed; there have always been a subset of pediatric hepatitis cases with no clear cause.</p> <p>In the new study, the researchers found that from October 2021 to March 2022, the number of weekly emergency room visits and monthly hospital admissions that were recorded as being associated with pediatric hepatitis of an unspecified cause was not significantly higher than prepandemic baselines, calculated as far back as 2017. The number of pediatric liver transplants per month did not increase significantly either, the study found.</p>

	<p>To investigate the adenovirus hypothesis, the scientists reviewed data from the company Labcorp, which routinely tests pediatric stool samples for adenovirus type 40 and 41, which generally cause gastrointestinal symptoms. The share of samples testing positive was not significantly higher in recent months than in the years before the pandemic, the scientists found.</p> <p>The findings diverge from reports from Britain, where officials have reported a small uptick in unexplained hepatitis among young children in 2022 compared to previous years, as well as an increase in adenovirus infections.</p> <p>Because pediatric hepatitis remains rare, a modest increase would be difficult to detect, the researchers caution, and continued investigation and monitoring is needed. “Ongoing assessment of trends, in addition to enhanced epidemiologic investigations, will help contextualize reported cases of acute hepatitis of unknown etiology in U.S. children,” they write.</p> <p>The new study has a number of limitations, the authors note. There is no comprehensive database of unexplained pediatric hepatitis cases in the United States so the true prevalence remains unknown. There are also lags between when hospital admissions and liver transplants occur and when these outcomes are reported, which means that more recent cases might be missing from the analysis.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 China mass testing for zero-Covid
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/business/china-covid-testing.html
GIST	<p>For an hour every day, Xu Xinhua waits in line for a health worker to push a swab down his throat and swirl it around. Each time, he hopes his Covid test will be negative so that he may continue delivering food, medicine and flowers to residents across Shanghai.</p> <p>Mr. Xu, 49, is paid hourly by Shansong Express, an intercity courier service, but only when he is fulfilling orders. “That means you work an hour for no gain,” he said in an interview.</p> <p>The routine is familiar to hundreds of millions of people as China makes lab tests for Covid-19 a permanent feature of daily life. In major cities across the country, even where there are no reported cases, residents are being required to present a negative P.C.R. test to go shopping, ride the subway or bus, or participate in public activities.</p> <p>China is the last country in the world that is trying to eliminate Covid, and the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant is challenging its strategy of mass lockdowns and quarantines. The country already uses health code apps to surveil its citizens and track infections, and it imposes stringent lockdowns and centralized quarantines for confirmed cases and close contacts.</p> <p>Officials hope the regular mass testing will help isolate cases in the community before they spiral into bigger outbreaks. But the policy can be expensive and time-consuming, undercutting the central government’s efforts to fire up the economy.</p> <p>In Shanghai, barely two weeks after the city lifted its two-month lockdown, the authorities have placed millions under new lockdowns to conduct mass testing, setting off protests in some areas. In Beijing, days after the city said it had brought an outbreak under control, cases hit a three-week high on Tuesday. In the eastern district of Chaoyang, where an outbreak was tied to one bar, authorities began testing residents for three days and shut businesses.</p> <p>Workers say the time required to get tested is cutting into their pay. Local governments are taking money from poverty alleviation projects to pay for testing. Businesses are concerned that the requirement will hurt productivity, and economists worry people will stay home to avoid the bother.</p> <p>Some local officials have tried to scale back testing. Others have acknowledged the huge burden that routine testing has imposed on citizens. But China’s top leader, Xi Jinping, has ordered the country to</p>

“unswervingly” stick to the strategy of stamping out infections, and dozens of officials have been fired for mishandling outbreaks, making any effort to loosen restrictions politically risky.

“When you are a local government official and you are facing these competing demands, you are going to rank them,” said Yanzhong Huang, a global health expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. “I think any rational local government official will still have more incentives to enthusiastically pursue zero Covid than to take a more flexible approach.”

After a vice premier, Sun Chunlan, ordered cities to ensure that residents can get tested within a 15-minute walk from where they live, tiny testing booths, with holes for gloved hands to stick out and swab throats, appeared in town squares, shopping plazas and parks.

Health officials in 57 cities and five of China’s 31 provinces — covering nearly half of the country’s 1.4 billion people — have started some sort of normalized testing system, according to a report by the Suzhou-based financial firm Soochow Securities.

The approach has fed public anger in some places. In Shanghai, the authorities have forced residential compounds or even city blocks back into lockdown for testing in recent days, sometimes because just one resident happened to be in the same store or subway car as someone who later tested positive.

On Monday night, frustrated residents in the city’s northeastern district of Yangpu banged on pots and shouted “End the lockdown!” after their compound was locked down over the weekend, said Jaap Grolleman, a Dutch expatriate who lives in the neighborhood. More than a dozen police officers stood watch outside a giant wrought iron gate that was locked shut, he said.

“People are worried about taking the subway or going to the shopping mall,” said Mr. Grolleman, who saw his neighbors protesting. “You don’t know if someone before you or after you tests positive, meaning that you would be dragged into quarantine or your whole compound would go into lockdown.”

In Beijing’s Chaoyang district, some residents are bristling at more testing and lockdowns. Zoey Zhou, a journalist who lives in the district, said she worried that if she missed a test, her health code app would prevent her from being able to enter her neighborhood.

“I don’t think it is acceptable for the government to then put more burden on the public and increase surveillance in the name of epidemic prevention,” Ms. Zhou said. “Why am I being deprived of the freedom I should have?”

There are signs of how China’s pandemic policies are rippling through the economy. Fewer people are shopping, pushing retail sales down. People are less interested in buying property; real estate sales in April plunged 39 percent from a year earlier.

Local governments are struggling to pay for all the testing. In Yangquan, a city in northern China, officials said they would build a mass testing system despite the city’s “severe financial restraints.” In Kaifeng, to the south, officials said they had scraped together \$3 million for testing “under very difficult financial circumstances.”

Estimates of the total cost of the new testing policy vary, but are in the tens of billions of dollars. If testing is extended to small cities, capturing as much 70 percent of the population, it could cost as much as 1.8 percent of annual economic growth, according to the Japanese bank Nomura.

Shanghai has said that in August it will start charging residents for every test. A single test will cost Mr. Xu, the delivery worker, roughly half of what he makes in an hour. His income had already taken a hit during Shanghai’s two-month lockdown, when he had to live in a hotel that would allow him to come and go.

Return to Top	<p>Parts of the government are sounding the alarm about the need to limit the impact the measures are having. A Beijing health official warned on Thursday that P.C.R. testing “should not become the norm.” And some cities have eased the requirements for how frequently tests must be taken.</p> <p>In the southern province of Jiangxi, where civil servants have faced pay cuts and a squeeze on bonuses for months because the budget is so tight, officials decided last week to stop mass testing in areas with low cases, citing it as an obstacle to economic development.</p> <p>Testing can break a transmission chain before it escalates into a broader outbreak, experts say, but it is unsustainable in the long term. Other measures, such as increasing vaccinations and securing antiviral drugs, could help a country develop a broader immunity and be better prepared for future outbreaks.</p> <p>But of China’s 264 million people who are 60 or older, just 64 percent have received a booster, a figure that experts say is too low. A third dose of China’s main Sinovac vaccine is needed to significantly increase protection against severe disease and death, according to a recent study.</p> <p>Some business leaders have pointed out what they see as the shortsightedness of the government’s approach. In a recent meeting with Li Keqiang, China’s premier, and other foreign business leaders, Jörg Wuttke, China’s chief representative for BASF, the German chemical giant, urged the leader to focus on vaccinations instead of testing, Mr. Wuttke said. It was unfathomable, he said he had told Mr. Li, how failing to vaccinate the elderly “can hold the economy hostage.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Iran still hopes to revive nuclear deal
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/14/iran-says-it-hasnt-given-nuclear-deal/
GIST	<p>Iran’s top diplomat said Tuesday that Tehran still hopes to revive the 2015 nuclear deal despite stalled talks with the U.S. and other world powers that have led many to conclude the accord is dead.</p> <p>The agreement, which established limits on Iran’s covert nuclear programs in return for the lifting of international sanctions, has been on life support since President Trump repudiated the deal in 2018 and re-imposed harsh U.S. sanctions on Iran’s economy and its trading partners.</p> <p>President Biden hoped to restore a version of the original accord, but multilateral talks in Vienna have lasted more than a year have yet to produce a deal.</p> <p>Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian acknowledged that his country had recently revived more nuclear activities forbidden under the agreement, after the U.S. and its European allies backed a resolution condemning Iran before the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency last week.</p> <p>“However, we have not abandoned the negotiating table, as the negotiations and messages are being exchanged between” Iran and the West, he told reporters in Tehran, according to the state-controlled Tasnim news agency.</p> <p>“Iran has never run away from the negotiating table,” Mr. Abdollahian claimed after a meeting with visiting Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. “The Islamic Republic of Iran won’t distance itself from the logic of diplomacy.”</p> <p>Deal backers say the diplomatic stalemate has allowed Iran to move closer to making a nuclear bomb and raised tensions across the region. But the Biden administration faces considerable opposition in Congress and from allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israel against a revived nuclear deal.</p> <p>The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has scheduled a closed hearing Wednesday to get an update on the state of the talks from Biden administration officials, including State Department special envoy Robert Malley.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Study: triple vaccinated, no omicron boost
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/people-who-caught-covid-in-first-wave-get-no-immune-boost-from-omicron
GIST	<p>People who caught Covid during the first wave of the pandemic get no boost to their immune response if they subsequently catch Omicron, a study of triple vaccinated people reports.</p> <p>Experts say that while three doses of a Covid jab help to protect individuals against severe outcomes should they catch Omicron, previous infections can affect their immune response.</p> <p>“If you were infected during the first wave, then you can’t boost your immune response if you have an Omicron infection,” said Prof Rosemary Boyton, of Imperial College London, a co-author of the study.</p> <p>The team also found an Omicron infection offered little extra protection against catching the variant again. “When Omicron started flying around the country, people kept saying that’s OK, that will improve people’s immunity,” said Boyton. “What we’re saying is it’s not a good booster of immunity.”</p> <p>The team said the findings may help to explain why reinfections with Omicron over a short time period have been so frequent, adding the findings were also important for vaccine development.</p> <p>Writing in the journal Science, the researchers reported how they followed the vaccination and infection experiences of 731 triple vaccinated healthcare workers in the UK from March 2020 to January 2022. The team then used blood samples collected from participants in the weeks after their third dose of vaccine to explore their antibody and T-cell responses towards the Omicron variant, BA.1.</p> <p>The participants varied considerably in terms of their Covid history, including whether they had had a previous Covid infection and, if so, the variant involved.</p> <p>The results suggested that, regardless of the participants’ previous infection history, a few weeks after their third Covid jab their levels of T-cells against Omicron proteins were poor, while levels of antibodies against Omicron proteins were lower than against other variants.</p> <p>But previous infections also mattered. Among other findings the team reported infection with Omicron increased protection against future infection with other variants. However, it only offered a limited boost to protection against another Omicron infection – a response that was actually weakened among those who had also previously had the original strain of the virus.</p> <p>The team said the results held for both antibody and T-cell responses, and suggested those who caught Covid in the first wave of the pandemic did not gain a boost to their immune response should they subsequently catch Omicron.</p> <p>The researchers said the finding was a surprise as it was typically assumed that a prior infection, even of a different variant, would act to boost an individual’s immune response.</p> <p>Prof Danny Altmann, another author of the study, said that while it had previously been thought Covid variants such as Omicron had developed mutations in their spike protein that helped them to evade immune responses, the situation was more complex.</p> <p>“It’s actually worse than that, because the adaptations that the spike [protein] has now are actually inducing a kind of regulation or shutdown of immune response,” he said, adding that while the study looked at responses to the BA.1, similar findings were likely for other subvariants of Omicron.</p> <p>The team added that with people in the UK having had very different histories of Covid infections and vaccinations, the study was important as it suggested this “immune imprinting” would shape subsequent immunity against the next variant.</p>

Altmann said that while the continued low levels of hospitalisation and deaths from Covid in the UK, despite high levels of infection, suggested Covid jabs continued to offer protection against death and severe disease, the findings could be important for the development of new vaccines.

But he added the findings raised other concerns. “We’re not getting herd immunity, we’re not building up protective immunity to Omicron,” he said. “So we face not coming out the other end of infections and re-infections and breakthrough infections.”

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HEADLINE	06/14 Russians fighting for Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/14/russians-fighting-for-ukraine
GIST	<p>Walking around Kyiv in his new Ukrainian military attire, Igor Volobuyev felt as if he finally fulfilled his purpose.</p> <p>For weeks after leaving Russia for Ukraine, the former vice-president of Gazprombank spent his days trying to convince officials to provide him with Ukrainian documents and allow him to sign up for military service to fight against a country where he had spent most of his adult life.</p> <p>“The moment war broke out, I knew right away I wanted to go and defend Ukraine,” Volobuyev said in an interview in the Ukrainian capital.</p> <p>“I first wanted to join the territorial defence units in the Sumi region, where I grew up. I reached out to a lot of officials but legally it was not possible for me to fight there as a Russian.”</p> <p>Soon, however, Volobuyev was presented with the option to join the “Freedom for Russia” legion, a special military unit that is part of the Ukrainian armed forces and is made up entirely of Russian nationals.</p> <p>He said he embraced the chance with open arms, and on Saturday in a video address, Volobuyev, holding an automatic gun, announced that he had joined the legion.</p> <p>“I am very glad I have achieved my first goal. But now I have to quickly undergo military training so I can actually go and fight. I can’t stop halfway,” he said.</p> <p>The 50-year-old has Ukrainian roots but holds a Russian passport and lived most of his life in Moscow where he became the vice-president at Gazprombank, Russia’s third-largest bank which is owned by energy company Gazprom. He was one of a handful of high-profile Russian defectors who condemned the war.</p> <p>Now, his decision to take up arms against Russia is another twist in a remarkable story. His public defection had already caused shockwaves given his senior role in a company that is at the heart of the Russian establishment and is chaired by Alexei Miller, the CEO of Gazprom, who is close to Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>“I made compromises with myself for a long time ... But on the 24 February [the day Russia launched its invasion], any talk of compromise became impossible,” he said. “I could not be part of this crime.”</p> <p>Not much is known about the Freedom for Russia legion that Volobuyev joined. News of its formation was announced on Telegram on 12 March and some of its members – wearing balaclavas – held a press conference in Kyiv in early April. On its Telegram channel, it frequently publishes pictures of its members engaged in military preparations.</p> <p>“I was already known to the public so I could speak out,” said Volobuyev. “But for the other members and their families, it is very dangerous to talk about this, so the group is very secretive.”</p>

Volobuyev declined to say what the size of the legion was and where it has been fighting, citing military secrecy, but added the unit was frequently engaged in active fighting.

He stressed that the unit was “not a group of mercenaries” but an official part of the Ukrainian armed forces and therefore, if captured, the soldiers should be treated under international humanitarian law.

The unit’s official badge is displayed on Volobuyev’s uniform. The white and blue flag is used by Russian anti-war protesters both inside and outside the country. It mimics the design of the Russian flag but with the red band changed to white to remove the association with “blood and violence”, Volobuyev said.

While Volobuyev’s main motivation for picking up arms was to defend Ukraine, which he described as his “only motherland”, he said most of the Russians in the legion were seeking regime change in Moscow.

“From what I have already seen, it is a group of highly motivated Russians who believe that defeating Russia now is the only way to create a democratic, civilised country,” he said.

Artyom (not his real name), another member of the unit, said he joined “because it was the only chance to get rid of this regime” and had been engaged in opposition politics in Russia before leaving the country in 2020.

He said he moved to Ukraine shortly before the war, sensing an imminent Russian attack. “I love my motherland,” he said. “I wish it didn’t have to come to this, but we have to end this system. I hope I can return home after the war.”

Some Russians have found other ways to contribute to Ukraine’s military efforts.

Soon after the war broke out, Maxim Motin, a former local opposition deputy in Moscow who has lived in Kyiv for the last four years, quickly set up several production lines to make body armour vests and helmets for the Ukrainian army.

“Especially in the early days of the war, there was a big demand for body armour. We have made over 700 vests so far and many helmets,” Motin said in a phone interview from the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, where he coordinates production of the army gear.

For years, Motin said he wanted to change Russia from the inside via politics, but he said he was forced to eventually flee the country in 2018 after threats from the Russian security services.

Now, he said, he didn’t think twice about supplying military gear to help the Ukrainian army in its fight against his homeland.

Motin said the authorities in Moscow had recently opened two criminal cases against him for his support of Ukraine, including the serious charge of terrorist financing.

“I don’t associate myself at all with the bloody regime in Russia and everyone who supports the war,” Motin said. “I believe Russia needs to lose, on the battleground.”

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HEADLINE	06/15 Day 112 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/15/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-112-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the outcome of the battle for the Donbas region will determine the course of the war, adding that Ukraine’s forces are suffering “painful losses” in Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk. The battle for Luhansk’s Sievierodonetsk is now the

biggest fight in Ukraine as its defenders try to [repel a fierce Russian onslaught in the twin eastern cities](#).

- **Russia has told Ukrainian forces holed up in Sievierodonetsk's Azot chemical plant to lay down their arms by early Wednesday.** Fighters should "stop their senseless resistance and lay down arms" from 8am Moscow time (5am GMT), Mikhail Mizintsev, head of Russia's national defence management centre told the Interfax news agency.
- **Russia said it would set up a humanitarian corridor on Wednesday** for trapped civilians seeking to flee intense fighting in Sievierodonetsk. Serhiy Haidai, governor of the Luhansk region, said about 500 civilians, 40 of them children, were sheltering from heavy Russian attacks in the Azot chemical plant.
- **Zelenskiy repeated his call for the west to step up the provision of heavy weapons to Ukraine.** Ukraine's deputy defence minister Hanna Malyar said the country had received only 10% of what it asked for and there was no path to victory without the aid: "No matter how hard Ukraine tries, no matter how professional our army is, without the help of western partners we will not be able to win this war". Zelenskiy added that Ukraine does not have enough anti-missile systems to shoot down Russian projectiles targeting its cities. "Our country does not have enough of them ... there can be no justification in delays in providing them."
- **Nato must build out "even higher readiness" and strengthen its weapons capabilities along its eastern border,** the military alliance's chief said on Tuesday ahead of a summit in Madrid at the end of the month. Secretary general Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance needed a "more robust and combat-ready forward presence and an even higher readiness and more pre-positioned equipment and supplies."
- **Leaders of seven European Nato members pledged support for applications by Sweden and Finland to join the alliance.** "My message on Swedish and Finnish membership is that I strongly welcome that. It's an historic decision. It will strengthen them, it will strengthen us," Stoltenberg told reporters after a meeting at The Hague on Tuesday.
- **US president Joe Biden said temporary silos will be built along the border with Ukraine, including in Poland, in a bid to help export more grain.** Referring to the 20 million tons of grain locked in Ukraine, Biden told a union convention in Philadelphia: "It can't get out through the Black Sea because it'll get blown out of the water ... So we're going to build silos, temporary silos, on the borders of Ukraine, including in Poland."
- **Jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny has [reportedly been moved to maximum-security prison](#).** Navalny was moved to the IK-6 prison in the village of Melekhovo in the Vladimir region, Russian news agencies reported, citing Sergei Yazhan, chairman of the regional Public Monitoring Commission.
- **Russia [banned British journalists](#), including correspondents from the Guardian, and defence industry figures** from entering the country, calling it a response to western sanctions and pressure on its state-run media outlets abroad.
- **Pope Francis said Moscow's invasion of Ukraine was "[perhaps somehow provoked](#)"** as he recalled a conversation in the run-up to the war in which he was warned that Nato was "barking at the gates of Russia".
- **Russian president Vladimir Putin probably still wants to capture much if not all of Ukraine** but has had to narrow his tactical objectives in war, the US undersecretary of defence has said. "I still think he has designs on a significant portion of Ukraine, if not the whole country. That said, I do not think he can achieve those objectives," Colin Kahl said while speaking at an event hosted by the centre for new American security.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Russia bans UK journalists
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/jun/14/russia-bans-29-uk-journalists-including-guardian-correspondents
GIST	Russia has banned 29 members of the British media, including five Guardian journalists, from entering the country, its foreign ministry has said.

Moscow said the sweeping action was a response to western sanctions and the “spreading of false information about Russia”, as well as “anti-Russian actions of the British government”.

“The British journalists included in the list are involved in the deliberate dissemination of false and one-sided information about Russia and events in Ukraine and Donbas,” the ministry said in a statement.

Twenty individuals it described as “associated with the defence complex”, including military figures, senior aerospace figures and MPs, were also banned.

Among the journalists banned are the Guardian correspondents Shaun Walker, Luke Harding, Emma Graham-Harrison and Peter Beaumont, as well as Katharine Viner, the editor-in-chief of the Guardian.

British journalists working for the BBC, the Sunday Times, the Daily Mail, the Independent, Daily Telegraph, Sky News and a number of other outlets have also been banned. The editors-in-chief of the Times, Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail and Independent were also listed.

A Guardian spokesperson said: “This is a disappointing move by the Russian government and a bad day for press freedom. Trusted, accurate journalism is more important now than ever, and despite this decision we will continue to report robustly on Russia and on its invasion of Ukraine.”

Russia has launched an unprecedented crackdown on Russian and foreign independent news outlets since its 24 February invasion of Ukraine, as well as on foreign social media networks. Legislation was introduced soon after the war began to criminalise media outlets that disseminate “false information” about the Russian army.

A number of media groups stopped operating in Russia as a result, with the draconian law in effect threatening to punish independent journalism with prison sentences of up to 15 years. Russia has also blocked access to several foreign news organisations’ websites, including the BBC and Deutsche Welle.

Russia warned US news organisations this month they risked being stripped of their accreditation unless the treatment of Russian journalists in the US improved.

“Work on expanding the Russian ‘stop list’ will continue,” the statement said.

Among those banned on the second part of the list were the UK minister of state for defence procurement, Jeremy Quin, and Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston.

The full list is:

Shaun Walker, Guardian correspondent; Con Coughlin, Daily Telegraph columnist; Stuart Ramsay, chief correspondent, Sky News; James Rothwell, Daily Telegraph journalist; John Witherow, editor-in-chief, the Times; Chris Evans, editor-in-chief, the Daily Telegraph; Katharine Viner, editor-in-chief, the Guardian; Richard Sharp, chair of the BBC board of governors; Timothy Davie, director general of the BBC; Clive Myrie, BBC correspondent and news presenter; Orla Guerin, BBC correspondent; Nick Robinson, BBC presenter; Paul Adams, BBC correspondent; Nick Beake, BBC correspondent; Alexander Thomson, Channel 4 News correspondent and presenter; Dan Rivers, ITV correspondent; Peter Beaumont, Guardian correspondent; Emma Graham-Harrison, Guardian correspondent; Sophy Ridge, journalist and Sky News presenter; Catherine Newman, journalist and host of Channel 4 News; Edward Verity, editor-in-chief, Daily Mail; Christian Broughton, editor-in-chief, the Independent; Larisa Brown, military news editor, the Times; Mark Galeotti, political scientist; Joseph Barnes, Daily Telegraph correspondent; Gideon Rachman, Financial Times correspondent; Luke Harding, Guardian correspondent; Dominic Lawson, Sunday Times and Daily Mail columnist; Lawrence Freedman, Sunday Times columnist.

Jeremy Quin, minister of state for defence procurement; Leo Docherty, under secretary of defence; Benjamin Key, commander of the Royal Navy, chief of staff of the Royal Navy; Mike Wigston, RAF commander; Robert Magowan, deputy chief, UK strategic command; Charles Stickland, commander, joint operations, UK armed forces; Roger Martyn Carr, chair of the board of directors, BAE Systems; Charles

	Woodburn, executive director of the BAE Systems; David Armstrong, managing director of BAE Systems; Glynn Phillips, managing director of BAE Systems; Clifford Robson, managing director of BAE Systems; Alexander Cresswell, chair of the board of directors and CEO of Thales UK; Christopher Shaw, chief operating officer of Thales UK; Paul Gosling, vice-president, Thales UK; Ewen McCrorie, vice-president, Thales UK; Suzanne Stratton, vice-president, Thales UK; Lynne Watson, vice-president, Thales UK; Gregory Campbell, MP; Gavin Robinson, MP; Samuel Wilson, MP.
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HEADLINE	06/14 Resistance group defends extreme methods
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/14/resistance-group-defends-extreme-methods-save-plan/
GIST	<p>The group leading the resistance to the lithium Nevada mine proposal is openly, defiantly outside the American mainstream — against capitalism, against industrialization and electrification, and “proudly Luddite in character.”</p> <p>The self-described “radical environmental movement dedicated to stopping the murder of the planet,” says it wants not just to shut down a mine but in time to eliminate the country’s industrial base in a bid to prevent a global ecological collapse. And the power of their mainstream opponents means that new methods of resistance are needed.</p> <p>Will Falk, a Deep Green Resistance activist, said in an email that U.S. law favors mining claims over American Indian cultural and spiritual uses. As a result, until “massive and organized” change within American industry is achieved, “no one will be very successful in stopping projects like the Thacker Pass project.”</p> <p>“We are fighting as hard as we can to keep mining corporations from turning Nevada and Oregon into sacrifice zones for electric car batteries,” he said.</p> <p>Fellow Deep Green Resistance activist Max Wilbert acknowledges he does not know whether the anti-mine campaign will be successful.</p> <p>“At Thacker Pass, grassroots environmentalists and traditional indigenous people are facing the overwhelming power of big business and government,” he said in a Facebook note. “This reflects a broader pattern: The entire environmental movement has been a running retreat for decades.”</p> <p>The group advocates “decisive ecological warfare” through unpredictable attacks on infrastructure that would cause cascading systems failures. Deep Green Resistance warns supporters on its website not to talk to federal agents and to make clear that the group is a legal, aboveground environmental group. But in a section on security procedures, the organization mentions covert underground activities in support of Deep Green Resistance goals.</p> <p>The website says there is a firewall between Deep Green Resistance and “underground action.”</p> <p>The group’s primary activities are legal, it says, “in contrast with ‘underground’ organizations that conduct clandestine, highly illegal activities.”</p> <p>The website says, “We advocate for this, as we think coordinated underground action is the best chance for saving the planet.”</p> <p>Deep Green Resistance does not plan or carry out underground action, yet the website links to a page titled “Underground Action Calendar” listing various direct actions. Those actions include the cutting of fiber-optic cables in France in April that disrupted internet service.</p> <p>The organization seeks a four-pronged strategy: advertise, educate, infiltrate and expand.</p>

	<p>“For the sustainability of all life on earth we must fight united against the ruling elite on a number of fronts concurrently to enable an anti-imperialist movement to take root and an egalitarian global society to develop,” the post said. “The brutal industrial economy has failed miserably. Its inherent contradictions have merely served to: concentrate great wealth into the hands of the ruling elite; poison our atmosphere; create wars; famine; exploit our labor; torture and imprison us; and divide us by race, gender and religion.”</p> <p>Deep Green Resistance activists’ websites and blogs praise the Marxist-Leninist Black Panther Party and communist guerrilla leader Che Guevara as models.</p> <p>The group also plans to infiltrate “white radicals” using the Black Panther Party methods of social and community outreach.</p> <p>“Using this as a model, white radicals must awaken ‘redneck’ and ‘hillbilly’ Americans despite an aversion to their racial and gender politics,” the post said. “While it’s essential we combat the alt-right and Nazi party anytime they attempt to rally, it is also critically important that we infiltrate their communities and positively influence their children to disrupt their indoctrination into a world of fear and hatred.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Ukraine war brings peace Canada, Denmark
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/14/canada-denmark-greenland-hans-island/
GIST	<p>TORONTO — It’s a barren and inhospitable rock plopped in a frigid channel in the Arctic. One geologist who visited characterized it as “not a very exciting island.” A Canadian legal analyst once tried to point it out on a map in a presentation he had prepared for lawmakers but conceded that its size made it “very difficult to see.”</p> <p>“We don’t have a big blowup picture to show you,” he said.</p> <p>Nevertheless, for some five decades, Canada and Denmark have squabbled — mostly, but not always, politely — over the not-very-exciting Hans Island, a 0.5-square-mile mass in the Kennedy Channel of the Nares Strait that’s home to neither vegetation nor wildlife. The craggy outcropping — Tartupaluk in Inuit — lies between Canada’s Ellesmere Island and Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark.</p> <p>Now, at long last, there’s rapprochement in the dispute dubbed the “Flag war” or “Whisky war.”</p> <p>Officials from both countries, as well as Greenland, signed an agreement on Tuesday to resolve the long-standing fracas — the last remaining disagreement over a land border in the Arctic — with the Solomonian solution of dividing the island in two. Denmark gets about 60 percent of the island; Canada gets the rest.</p> <p>“I think it was the friendliest of all wars,” Mélanie Joly, Canada’s foreign minister, told reporters in Ottawa. “I’m happy to see that we’re resolving it with friends, partners and allies. ... It’s a win-win-win.”</p> <p>Both Canada and Denmark cast the “historic” agreement as an example of how border disputes can be resolved peacefully, without warfare or bitter legal wrangling, at a time when the rules-based international order is under strain — a reference in part to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>“As we stand here today, we see gross violation of international rules unfold in another part of the world,” said Jeppe Kofod, Denmark’s foreign minister. “In contrast, we have demonstrated how long-standing international disputes can be resolved peacefully and playing by the rules.”</p> <p>The dispute dates back to 1973, when Canadian and Danish diplomats were drawing up a maritime boundary in the Arctic. The line cut straight through Hans Island. The diplomats left the question of what to do about it unresolved.</p> <p>In the five decades that followed, Danish troops have visited the rocky mass several times, planting their flag and leaving a note and bottle of liquor to assert the country’s claim to the island. The Canadians also</p>

have made appearances, replacing the Danish liquor with Canadian whisky, erecting an inukshuk — a stone marker — and hoisting the maple leaf.

On at least one occasion, the Canadians took down a Danish flag and mailed it back to Copenhagen.

(There has been nary a peep from officials in both countries about the fate of the various bottles of alcohol.)

In the early 2000s, the Danes twice dispatched frigates with soldiers to the island, in what Robert Huebert, a political scientist at the University of Calgary, called an example of gunboat diplomacy.

“In any other understanding, that has led to warfare,” he said.

Lawmakers in Canada have occasionally pointed to the dispute over Hans Island as an example of the government of the day doing little to defend its interests in the Arctic.

“Denmark’s soldiers land on Canadian Arctic territory, hoist their flag, claim the island as their own and Canada does nothing,” one Conservative lawmaker charged in 2004. “How much Canadian territory has to be claimed by a foreign power before [then-Prime Minister Paul Martin] will speak up and stand up for Canada?”

A further escalation came in 2005, when Bill Graham, then Canada’s defense minister, choppered onto Hans Island to walk the frigid ground himself. That drew an official note of protest from Danish officials.

“We would like to maintain what was the *modus vivendi*,” Poul Erik Dam Kristensen, then the Danish ambassador to Canada, told the *Globe and Mail* “that if one of the parties visited the island, the party notifies the other party beforehand.”

The Canadians steadfastly maintained they needed to do no such thing — because it was their island.

In 2009, Danish Rear Adm. Nils Wang told a Canadian parliamentary defense committee that the last he had heard on the issue was that “we agree on disagreeing.”

“At least from the navy’s perspective in Denmark, we have been told by our foreign ministry not to go up there and put flags on the island anymore,” said Wang, who is now retired.

Alan Kessel, a legal adviser to Canada’s foreign ministry, assured another parliamentary committee in 2012 that the country was “not going to go to war with Denmark.”

“I can promise you that,” he said. “It’s being managed. It’s a rock, and we will deal with that.”

The Canadian government said that Inuit of Greenland and the Canadian territory of Nunavut were consulted during the negotiations of the agreement and that it will “ensure the continued access to and freedom of movement on the entirety of the island” for fishing and other cultural activities.

Huebert said there is a “pretty remote” possibility that there are natural resources such as oil and gas on the island, but noted there haven’t really been serious efforts to look. Canada, he added, has several other disputes in the Arctic that are unresolved, including with the United States over the Northwest Passage.

After signing the agreement to applause, Joly and Kofod exchanged alcohol and notes for the last time.

There would be no question about what the Canadians planned to do with their bottle.

It was going “straight” into the Canadian Museum of History, Joly said.

HEADLINE	06/14 Casualties rise as Russians gain in the east
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/06/14/russia-ukraine-war-putin-news-live-updates/
GIST	<p>Casualties are rising on each side as Russia makes incremental gains in Ukraine's east, a senior Pentagon official said, with the U.S. announcing plans to send more weapons to Ukraine to defend against the Kremlin's unrelenting bombardment.</p> <p>Colin Kahl, the U.S. undersecretary of defense for policy, said Tuesday that four M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems sent to Ukraine so far are just the beginning. Ukrainian officials have been asking for the weapons for months, seeing them as important to achieve something closer to parity against a Russian military that relies heavily on artillery.</p> <p>The destruction of the last bridge connecting the key city of Severodonetsk to Ukrainian resupply routes has left more than 500 people trapped inside in a chemical plant. Russia has offered to set up a humanitarian corridor Wednesday for civilians.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Marysville PD customer service officers
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/marysville-police-department-to-hire-customer-service-offers-for-less-serious-calls
GIST	<p>MARYSVILLE, Wash. — The Marysville Police Department will soon look to hire three customer service officers to assist with less serious calls.</p> <p>The Marysville City Council on Monday approved the addition to the department in attempts to free up commissioned officers for emergency calls and to reduce response times.</p> <p>Customer service officers can respond to cold-theft calls, non-injury and non-traffic-blocking accidents, abandoned vehicles, parking issues and other misdemeanor-related offenses that do not have suspect information, according to the city.</p> <p>The police department currently has one customer service officer who primarily works on animal-control cases.</p> <p>Erik Scairpon, the police chief, said he plans to fill the three positions by the end of the year. The budgeted costs for the salaries, vehicles and equipment is \$480,433 for 2022. The department will evaluate the program and determine future budgets afterward, according to the city's press release.</p> <p>"In recognition of the difficult hiring environment for local law enforcement officers that has evolved throughout the region over the past two years, this strategy offers an alternate avenue for non-commissioned officers to enter the Marysville workforce more quickly," the release said.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Jewish community outrage Kent settlement
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/kent/kent-settlement-former-assistant-police-chief-nazi-symbol/281-d3a8bef6-2303-4708-a012-0d2c46bb861e
GIST	<p>Jewish community leaders are expressing outrage over a settlement between the City of Kent and a former assistant police chief who was disciplined for displaying a Nazi insignia on his office door.</p> <p>The city settled with Derek Kammerzell for \$1.5 million to get him to walk away from his job at the Kent Police Department.</p> <p>"I'm just wondering how I'm going to explain to children as an educator that someone is going to be given all this money for doing something wrong," said Principal of the Seattle Hebrew Academy Rivy Kletenik.</p>

Derek Kammerzell initially was given a two-week unpaid suspension while the Kent Police Department investigated before public outcry led Kent Mayor Dana Ralph to ask for the assistant chief's resignation.

An independent investigation found that in September 2020, Kammerzell posted a Nazi insignia on his office door. There were additional allegations that Kammerzell made jokes about the Holocaust.

"We also took the advice of our outside legal counsel that under Washington state law, there was not enough, given no history of discipline, that he would be terminated," said Ralph back in January regarding why Kammerzell was not fired by the department. "We acted in what we believed was the most legally defensible position."

In order to get Kammerzell to leave the department the city was required to negotiate a settlement with his attorney. The city has been actively negotiating with Kammerzell's representatives since that investigation concluded in February 2021, and the two sides reached a settlement this week in the amount of \$1,520,000.

"How can anyone see that as something other than rewarding bad behavior?" Kletenik said.

Ralph and Kent Police Chief Rafael Padilla later acknowledged they strongly underestimated the backlash that would come with not firing Kammerzell, and gave a detailed explanation through a video message as to why their hands were tied on terminating the former assistant chief.

City leadership added in the statement about the settlement that they have had active conversations with local Jewish organizations and are committed to "learn and grow from this experience."

The Anti-Defamation League said in a statement:

"It is deplorable that an officer who displayed a Nazi insignia on his office door was given a \$1.5 million payout to resign from the force."

"ADL has been in touch with officials at the City of Kent to ensure that police officers who are associated with extremism or hate-related ideologies are not able to continue serving their community."

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HEADLINE	06/14 Seattle FD seeks women, minorities recruits
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/seattle-fire-department-recruit-women-people-of-color/281-a586fbe9-4c6a-4f3f-834e-060fc9f8e26e
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — While attempting to fill 113 vacancies at the Seattle Fire Department, Chief Harold Scoggins said they're focusing on recruiting more women and people of color.</p> <p>Currently, 93% of Seattle firefighters are men.</p> <p>"The leadership of our organization is overwhelmingly white. That's the fire service in general," said Seattle Fire Chief Harold Scoggins.</p> <p>Assistant Chief at Kitsap Fire and Rescue Kara Putnam said she's also seen a lack of diversity over the course of her 14-year career.</p> <p>"I'm the first female Chief Officer at my organization, Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue, as well as Kitsap County," said Putnam.</p> <p>She says early on she had to overcome hurdles like proving she could do the job. But today she does see progress.</p>

	<p>"We just hired four brand new female firefighters, and so what I would like to be is a role model for them and to let them know you can find access to a leadership role in the fire service. You can be successful," Putnam said.</p> <p>Chief Scoggins said the Seattle Fire Department is also working to be a place where women and people of color can see themselves in station leadership and said the department is seeing progress when it comes to new recruits.</p> <p>"About 35% of our population that completed the process is actually people of color," he said.</p> <p>Chief Scoggins added, "when I got here seven years ago, we had nine deputy chiefs and none of them were women. Today four of them are women. So I can look at the ranks and I can see it."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Assisted living facilities staffing crisis
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/assisted-living-facilities-staffing-crisis-new-survey/281-ffd769e2-ad64-42e0-ad99-bce0440f3381
GIST	<p>FEDERAL WAY, Wash — Staffing shortages continue to disrupt industries across the country and one hit particularly hard is assisted living.</p> <p>According to a survey by the American Health Care Association, 87% of nursing homes are facing moderate to high staffing shortages, 99% rely on staff working overtime or taking extra shifts to keep running and 70% are hiring temporary staff.</p> <p>With burnout and fatigue, many people are choosing to leave the industry for other careers.</p> <p>Brookdale Senior Living operates hundreds of nursing homes, assisted living and memory care facilities, including over a dozen in the Pacific Northwest.</p> <p>"The Senior Living industry has the same staffing pressures that we're really seeing across other industries as well," said Laura Fischer, Vice President of Operations for Brookdale's west division.</p> <p>To manage staffing shortages, Brookdale had to turn to temporary staffing to meet needs at times. Fischer told KING 5 they are consistently evaluating how to bring people in and make them want to stay.</p> <p>"We've had to leverage other staffing agencies to come in and help us," Fischer said. "We're constantly reviewing ways to be more efficient in our communities, you know, balancing workloads, again, with the goal of ultimate meeting the needs for our residents."</p> <p>Fischer said there has recently seen an uptick in applications and it's encouraging.</p> <p>"We are seeing, you know, folks that did leave Brookdale or even leave the industry, you know, for various reasons, some of the challenges throughout the pandemic, but they have returned," Fischer said. "We've seen our associate pool grow. So in order to keep that staffing solid, it's really important that we focus on retention, and it's really important that other companies just like ours do the same thing, and really adjust with the changing needs of associates and residents."</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Seattle PD response times dramatically rise
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/police-response-times-are-dramatically-up-for-people-in-need-the-most-in-seattle
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Police response times for people in need in Seattle are dramatically up as the Seattle Police Department struggles with a staffing crisis, according to an report released from the King County Auditor's Office.</p>

Since January of 2020, more than 400 officers have left the Seattle Police Department, which is more than 30% of sworn officers on the force.

Response times have been a concern for well over a year.

New data shows that the situation is getting worse, with the highest-priority calls in some parts of Seattle taking on average over 11 minutes.

The average and median responses are up in nearly every part of the city when compared to the last four years, according to the report.

The [North and Southwest precincts](#) are struggling the most with response times for Priority 1 calls, which means there is an immediate threat to life. Response times on average are just over 11 minutes for those two precincts, which has increased from last year.

In 2019, response times were over 10 minutes for the North precinct and around eight minutes for the SW precinct for Priority 1 calls.

The [West precinct](#), which serves areas like West Seattle, it has the quickest average response times at under nine and a half minutes. That is also up from 2019, when it took officers just under seven minutes to respond to calls for help, according to the report.

When it comes to Priority 3 calls for West Seattle, it takes nearly two hours for officers to respond, the audit found. These calls are cases that present no significant threat of serious physical harm.

The report also dives into overtime numbers for SPD, and it shows that 55% to 88% of overtime is for patrol, including big events like those at Climate Pledge Arena.

Over the years, Seattle police officers, along with the union representing them, have said that many officers are leaving over the political climate in Seattle. They say officers are not supported by Seattle City Council members, after most called to defund the police in 2020, following protests over the deadly police shooting of George Floyd.

The new data on response times was presented to council members on Tuesday. Outside of Alex Pedersen, Sara Nelson and Debora Juarez, the rest have called to defund police in 2020.

Only one council member on the four-person Public Safety and Human Services Committee commented on the new response times, calling them "disturbing" and made a request for officers to stay.

On Tuesday, FOX 13 reached out to the council members who supported defunding police for comment about the latest response times. FOX 13 has not heard back as of yet.

During the campaign trail, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell said long response times were a concern for him and something he planned to address as mayor, if he won.

A spokesperson for Harrell released a statement in response to the new data:

"Every community in Seattle deserves to feel safe and be safe. Facing increasing crime and gun violence, Mayor Harrell is fully committed to addressing SPD's historic staffing crisis and hiring more officers to improve response times and ensure investigations are swift, thorough, and complete."

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HEADLINE	06/14 Report: racial disparities KCSO encounters
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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/racial-disparities-exist-in-encounters-with-king-county-sheriffs-office-but-data-lacking/
GIST	<p>The King County Sheriff's Office collects racial data on only about 4% of its service calls, a new audit found, but when data is collected, Black people are more likely to be arrested and more likely to be subject to the use of force by officers.</p> <p>White officers in the Sheriff's Office were more than twice as likely to use force than Black and Asian officers, says the King County Auditor's Office report, which covers 2019 to 2021.</p> <p>But in the vast majority of calls for service, sheriff's deputies do not collect data on the race of people they interact with. There are several reasons for this, but the primary one is simple: The computer dispatch system that officers use to record information about calls does not have a field to note the race of people who are stopped.</p> <p>The racial data that the auditor's office was able to glean about calls for service came from cross-referencing calls with separate systems that track arrests and uses of force.</p> <p>"Data show concerning racial disparities in uses of force and arrests in King County, similar to disparities other jurisdictions are finding," said King County Auditor Kymber Waltmunson. She added that the Sheriff's Office agreed with the auditor's recommendations, largely around improving data collection. The sheriff's office said it is beginning the process of getting a new computer dispatch system, but it will depend on "system requirements and budget."</p> <p>A second auditor's report, on traffic stops by the Sheriff's Office, also found racial data lacking, but found that white officers were 2.5 times more likely to use force against Black drivers than drivers of other races. Although safety is the primary reason cited for traffic stops, it found the Sheriff's Office doesn't assess whether traffic stops are improving safety or whether there are disparities in how officers conduct stops. Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall said she agreed that racial disparities "exist in the criminal legal system, in King County and throughout our country."</p> <p>She noted that there were more than 1 million calls for service in the time period covered and force was used in 619 of them, or about 0.06%, calling it "an infinitesimal amount of use of force."</p> <p>King County Executive Dow Constantine, who chose Cole-Tindall as sheriff earlier this year, said this year marks a "new chapter" for the department.</p> <p>"These two audits show exactly what anyone paying attention to race in America would expect: Unacceptable racial disparities persist in the criminal legal system, and that is true in King County government just as it is across our nation," Constantine said. "It is King County's mission to confront and eliminate these disparities, starting with reviewing policies, procedures, and training."</p> <p>A Constantine spokesperson said he expected they'd have more details on the sheriff's "changes and restructure plans" in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Dwight Dively, Constantine's chief operating officer, wrote in an official response to the audit that "data limitations and the excluding of incident context mean further analysis is needed."</p> <p>Dively wrote that the recommendation of adding race to the computer dispatch system is "reasonable," but "no single system will be able to provide all the necessary data to understand the demographics of calls for service."</p> <p>Part of the auditor's office work plan is monitoring "emerging issues in law enforcement," and the two audits were launched under that umbrella, given the county's new switch to an appointed, rather than elected, sheriff.</p>

	<p>The Sheriff's Office responds to about 350,000 calls for service a year, including 911 calls and calls initiated by officers.</p> <p>King County Code may also limit officers' ability to collect racial data, the audit found, a result of a 2018 county law that sought to make sure county data and resources weren't used to assist federal immigration enforcement and deportations.</p> <p>The audit recommended that the Metropolitan King County Council consider amending the law to make clear that the Sheriff's Office can collect race data.</p> <p>The audit also found that officers were sometimes concerned they couldn't correctly identify a person's race. But, the audit found, an officer's perception of a person's race is still important, "because any implicit or explicit bias would be based on that perception."</p> <p>The audit found that officers used force against Hispanic people 50% more often than against people of all races, accounting for population, and against Black people 29% more often. White people were 34% less likely to experience use of force by a sheriff's department officer than people of all other races.</p> <p>Some of the use-of-force disparities increased when the race of the officer, as well as the race of the person, was taken into account.</p> <p>"White officers used force around 75% more frequently against Black people than officers in other racial groups," the audit found.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Complaints against ex-SPD chief pending
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/3-complaints-against-former-seattle-police-chief-best-from-2020-sat-in-limbo-are-still-pending/
GIST	<p>Three misconduct complaints against former Seattle police Chief Carmen Best from the tumultuous summer of 2020 sat in limbo and are still pending two years after the events in question. Mayor Bruce Harrell's office sent the cases earlier this year to an investigator outside the city.</p> <p>Police watchdogs and Harrell's office say the cases stalled because former Mayor Jenny Durkan's office didn't agree to send them to an outside investigator, though she disputes that characterization.</p> <p>The specifics of the complaints haven't been made public. They involve Best's handling of tear gas during Black Lives Matter demonstrations and statements about the Capitol Hill protest zone known as the CHOP.</p> <p>There's been no detailed public accounting of what happened to the Office of Police Accountability complaints over the past two years, and there's no hard deadline for the cases to be completed.</p> <p>But the issue, also covered by PubliCola last week, could spur legislative action. City Councilmember Lisa Herbold is working on a bill that would establish a clearer process for complaints against chiefs.</p> <p>Thousands of complaints were filed against the Police Department during the summer of 2020. OPA consolidated those into 145 investigations, most of which have been completed.</p> <p>"I was alarmed to find out in the beginning of 2022 that there were three un-investigated complaints," Herbold said in an interview, arguing the issue has exposed "a gap in our accountability system."</p> <p>Two agencies were involved: OPA, which investigates misconduct complaints against Police Department employees, and the Office of Inspector General, which provides systemic oversight for the department and OPA.</p>

When the complaints against Best were filed, OPA's operations manual didn't allow the agency to investigate the chief, according to Harrell's office. Harrell's public safety adviser, Andrew Myerberg, was then OPA's director.

Myerberg, Inspector General Lisa Judge and Harrell's office say Durkan's office didn't agree to outsource the cases and asked OIG to take them instead. OIG declined, citing jurisdictional concerns and potential conflicts. OPA conducted preliminary investigations only, with no findings.

Harrell agreed to send the cases out after taking over from Durkan as mayor in January, and an outside investigator began work in April, according to Harrell's office.

"OPA is not releasing the investigator's name or associated company to facilitate the investigative process fairly" and to "prevent undue influence," Harrell spokesperson Jamie Housen said.

Durkan wasn't responsible for the cases sitting in limbo, said Chelsea Kellogg, a spokesperson for the ex-mayor. Though Durkan's office initially supported in-house options, OPA was an independent agency and could have subsequently outsourced the cases, Kellogg said.

According to Harrell's office, the complaints were filed before Best retired in September 2020. Neither Harrell's office nor OPA nor Durkan has provided a detailed timeline for what happened next. Best didn't return emails requesting comment. OPA declined to comment on the cases.

Though the specifics haven't been released, the titles given to the cases by OPA allude to the allegations:

- "Tear gas used after 30-day ban"
- "Sharing misinformation about crime in CHAZ/CHOP"
- "Chief lied about dispatch error during CHOP shooting"

The first complaint apparently refers to a controversy from June 2020, in which Durkan and Best announced that Best was banning the use of tear gas against protest crowds, only for police to deploy tear gas at a demonstration two days later. Best cited an exception to the ban, allowing SWAT officers to use tear gas "to protect life and to end standoff situations." Neither she nor Durkan had [clearly articulated](#) that the exception could apply to protests.

The second complaint may refer, at least partly, to statements by an assistant chief in June 2020 about business owners being extorted in the CHOP. Best repeated the extortion allegations in a video, and they appeared in the news, including The Seattle Times, before the Police Department [walked them back](#). The South Seattle Emerald [recently reported](#) that Best received an email from a city leader debunking the allegations before her video was released.

The third complaint may refer to the fatal shooting of 19-year-old Horace Lorenzo Anderson in the CHOP in June 2020. Best and the Police Department said police officers were blocked from immediately reaching Anderson by protesters. [KUOW later reported](#) that what slowed emergency responders from reaching Anderson was a miscommunication between police officers and firefighters.

Outside investigations

At the time the OPA complaints were filed, [the agency's manual said](#) the OPA director should, for complaints against the chief, consult with the mayor's office "to identify an appropriate city authority outside OPA or an independent investigator who will conduct any investigation necessary."

OPA recommended that the complaints be outsourced, but Durkan's office "did not agree to send these cases to an outside investigator," said Housen, the Harrell spokesperson.

After OIG declined the cases, OPA was asked to conduct preliminary investigations and then revisit the issue, Myerberg wrote in a February email to Herbold. The agency conducted preliminary investigations of varying degrees and sent the three cases to OIG for review, Myerberg wrote.

OPA's preliminary investigation of the misinformation complaint was reviewed by OIG in November 2020, and its preliminary investigation of the complaint related to the CHOP shooting was reviewed by OIG in September 2021. It's unclear whether OIG reviewed OPA's preliminary investigation of the tear gas complaint. Each of the three cases sat incomplete.

OPA's manual required consultation with Durkan's office but didn't give her the authority to approve or disapprove an outside investigation, said Kellogg, the Durkan spokesperson.

"The mayor was always supportive of OPA doing whatever it concluded was necessary on any complaint, including retaining outside investigators," Kellogg added, suggesting the onus was on OPA to act independently or return to consult again after the agency's preliminary investigations.

OPA could not act independently, Housen said. In January, the agency's manual was changed. It now allows OPA to investigate complaints against a chief, hand them off to another city agency or outsource them.

[The updated manual](#) still directs OPA to consult with the mayor, but it gives OPA the ultimate authority to make a decision. It also gives OPA explicit authority to investigate complaints against ex-chiefs.

Durkan supports any necessary clarifications "to the law or OPA manual to ensure all complaints against a former or current chief are thoroughly and expeditiously investigated," Kellogg said.

[Herbold's bill](#) would establish a new process for handling OPA complaints against police chiefs, authorizing the agency to decide whether to investigate a complaint, refer it to the city's human resources department or outsource it, with a review role for OIG and requirements for notifying of various officials.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Seattle housing market cools; layoffs loom
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/seattle-based-redfin-to-layoff-hundreds-of-employees-as-housing-market-cools/
GIST	<p>The cooling housing market is catching up with Seattle's real-estate tech companies.</p> <p>With fewer people buying homes, the listing site and brokerage Redfin said Tuesday it would lay off nearly 500 employees.</p> <p>"We don't have enough work for our agents and support staff, and fewer sales leaves us with less money for headquarters projects," CEO Glenn Kelman wrote in a message to employees that was also posted on the company's blog.</p> <p>It was not yet clear how many of the laid off workers are based in Seattle.</p> <p>The cuts mark a reversal of fortune for the real estate companies that basked in the recent white-hot housing market. Homebuyers flooded the market and competed for scarce inventory of homes for sale, and that drove up prices.</p> <p>Investors in companies such as Seattle-based Zillow and Redfin saw the upside. Their share prices climbed to their highest-ever levels in February 2021.</p> <p>But it's been downhill since.</p> <p>Zillow announced in November it would shutter its failed home-flipping business and lay off a quarter of its staff. Now, high home prices and high mortgage rates are dampening homebuyer demand and leading to fewer sales. And the broader stock market is falling.</p>

Redfin's share price was about \$8 Tuesday, a steep drop from \$61 a year ago. Zillow's hit \$30, down from \$117 at this time last year.

Redfin said in an [SEC filing](#) it plans to finish laying off 470 employees by the end of this month. That amounts to about 6% of its total workforce, or 8% when not including the employees of two other companies Redfin acquired, RentPath and Bay Equity.

"We could be facing years, not months, of fewer home sales," Kelman wrote in his message to employees.

Kelman said the layoffs were "the result of shortfalls in Redfin's revenues, not in the people being let go," but also noted a company "shift toward performance and profits."

Another brokerage, New York-based Compass, also announced cuts Tuesday. Compass said in an [SEC filing](#) it plans to lay off 10% of its workforce and shut down its title and escrow software company. Compass has 11 offices in the Seattle area.

Zillow and Redfin operate slightly different business models, but both are likely to be affected by a slower market.

Redfin runs a real estate brokerage with agents on staff. The company also flips houses. Zillow sells other real estate agents ads on its site, promising to help them generate more business. Both companies also offer home loan services.

Fewer home sales could mean less business for Redfin's agents and less willingness from other agents to advertise on Zillow, analysts from the investment advisory firm Evercore ISI wrote last month. Both companies posted significant losses last year.

Zillow [lost](#) about \$528 million, up from a loss of \$162 million in 2020 and driven in part by big losses in the shuttered flipping business. Redfin [lost](#) about \$110 million, up from \$18.5 million the year before.

At the same time, most of their executives saw pay increases.

Zillow executives saw big increases in their compensation because of a boost in stock options, according to an SEC filing. CEO Rich Barton's total compensation in 2021 was nearly \$21 million, including a base salary of \$670,000. That's about 146 times the pay of the median Zillow employee, according to the filing.

At Redfin, Kelman's total compensation was about \$299,000, roughly four times the median employee. According to an SEC filing, Kelman requested he receive no additional company equity for the year. He also opted to forgo a bonus unless the company had positive net income, which it did not, the filing said.

Other Redfin executives' total compensation ranged from \$2.2 million to \$3.2 million.

Not including companies they've recently acquired, Redfin employs about 5,800 people and Zillow employs about 7,250.

With the layoffs, Redfin plans to spend less on engineers, analytics and user research, Kelman wrote.

"When we were turning away tens of thousands of customers in 2020 and 2021, we had to hire a thousand employees a month to catch up, requiring berserk levels of recruiting, training and licensing," Kelman's message said. "There's no avoiding that those groups will be hardest hit today."

HEADLINE	06/14 UN chief: govt. inaction climate 'dangerous'
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/un-chief-governments-inaction-on-climate-is-dangerous/
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres warned Tuesday of a “dangerous disconnect” between what scientists and citizens are demanding to curb climate change, and what governments are actually doing about it.</p> <p>Guterres said global greenhouse gas emissions need to drop by 45% this decade, but are currently forecast to increase by 14%.</p> <p>“We are witnessing a historic and dangerous disconnect: science and citizens are demanding ambitious and transformative climate action,” he said at a climate conference in Austria. “Meanwhile many governments are dragging their feet. This inaction has grave consequences.”</p> <p>Guterres said Russia’s war in Ukraine risked worsening the crisis, because major economies were “doubling down on fossil fuels” that are to blame for much of the emissions stoking global warming.</p> <p>“New funding for fossil fuel exploration and production infrastructure is delusional,” he said in a video message to the Austrian World Summit, initiated by former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. “It will only further feed the scourge of war, pollution and climate catastrophe.”</p> <p>Guterres urged countries to instead end all coal use by 2040, with rich nations doing so by 2030, and focus on replacing fossil fuels with renewable sources of energy, such as solar and wind power.</p> <p>“Renewables are the peace plan of the 21st century,” he said.</p> <p>Schwarzenegger, who has long campaigned against environmental pollution, said the war in Ukraine was another reason to stop using fossil fuels.</p> <p>He cited research showing that Europe paid Russia tens of billions of dollars for energy imports in the first two months of the year.</p> <p>“No matter how you look at it, we have blood on our hands because we are financing the war,” said Schwarzenegger.</p> <p>“We must do whatever it takes to eliminate our addiction to fossil fuels,” he added. “We must be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Failure is no option here.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 'SoundGuardian' tracks Puget Sound state
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/soundguardian-tracks-state-puget-sound/281-4f0c39a6-a82e-4687-b5a1-1c5f984c3d07
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — On board the King County research vessel known as "SoundGuardian," oceanographers work to get a deep understanding of Puget Sound that’s not possible to get onshore.</p> <p>“Puget Sound is a really dynamic place, and there are a lot of things happening all at once,” said Water Quality Planner/Project Manager Taylor Martin. “We can only know so much just by looking at the water. We have to actually go out on the water and collect samples to really get a handle on what is happening under the surface.”</p> <p>For decades, King County has collected data about the health of Puget Sound’s Central Basin to get a baseline of metrics such as pH (ocean acidification), temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, algal blooms and nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen. Having a baseline will help researchers identify and track changes as the population grows and the climate changes. SoundGuardian is their current research vessel,</p>

equipped with tools that allow them to do some on-board monitoring - though most analysis is done in laboratories.

Scientists participate in sample collection trips every two weeks, stopping at stations that include locations near wastewater treatment plant outfalls, Elliott Bay and the Central Basin. Other stations include checkups on real-time continuous water quality monitors at the [Seattle Aquarium](#) and other buoys throughout King County's marine environment.

Researchers collect phytoplankton and conduct zooplankton tows, in addition to taking water samples and conducting on-site analyses for chemical parameters.

"There are a couple of things we're really trying to understand with a program like this," Martin explained. "We're collecting data for a long time. This is a long-term data set, and that helps us with a couple of things. One is baseline conditions. What does the Puget Sound look like in an average May, an average July, all the way through the water column? What does it look like? What is there? Because if something changes, we can see a change from that baseline."

Crunching data is complex, and it can be hard to pinpoint one factor most responsible for changes, which can be cyclical. But data has shown some trends, including a slight upward trend in temperature.

"Acidity and temperature are things that we really want to be monitoring because those are the things we anticipate being impacted by climate," said [King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks](#) Director Christie True. "Sometimes those changes can be really small, but they can be impactful. Maybe over time, it looks like it's very small. But in some places, the difference could be quite large. Certain parts of Puget Sound, certain parts of our streams or rivers, could see vast fluctuations in the amount of temperature, and that's bad for salmon and many other things there."

True said data can be analyzed to determine if changes are based on climate, season, or other factors such as the loss of trees in urban areas – or a combination of all these factors.

"Water quality is essential to the quality of life in this region. It always has been. We have the beautiful mountains, and the lakes and rivers and then we have Puget Sound. And it's really part of our essence, and we have to make sure that we protect it," True said. "As our population grows, we need to be sure we put in the infrastructure to protect public health and the environment. So, that's why we have to make sure we have wastewater treatment and good garbage collection. We want to make sure our stormwater also is safe. All that infrastructure is important to be matched up with the population growth that we have so we can maintain the environment and also protect people's health."

A large part of the monitoring work is also to assess how wastewater is impacting the Sound, if at all. In the mid-1950s, there was little wastewater treatment for the quickly-growing region. True said many lakes and rivers were polluted, and beaches had to be closed. That prompted the creation of a treatment system to capture wastewater and plan for the growth of the region.

"It worked marvelously," True said. "The lakes got much clearer, you could go swimming, so that really started the extent of the monitoring we do right now because we wanted to maintain that."

As scientists continue to monitor Puget Sound, True said there are some things everyday people can do to contribute to its health. That includes picking up animal waste, reducing chemicals used in gardens and yards, and disposing of excess medication properly.

"A lot of the times when you look at Puget Sound, it looks good. It's very pretty," True said. "But what is happening underneath the surface is really important, and there are a lot of things that live in Puget Sound. We certainly know about salmon and orca, but there are other fishes and critters that rely on the food chain. So, it's important that the whole system is healthy and that we're prepared for changes as climate develops and can change the quality of Puget Sound. We want to make sure our shoreline has plenty of habitats for these things to live."

HEADLINE	06/14 SPD uses overtime pay emphasis patrols
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-police-forced-to-dip-into-overtime-budget-for-emphasis-patrols-in-problem-areas
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - Police are being forced to dip into their overtime budget to provide emphasis patrols in problem areas like Pike and Pine downtown and 12th and Jackson in the Chinatown-International District.</p> <p>Seattle de-funded emphasis patrols last year, and staff told the city council Tuesday 80 percent of SPD's miscellaneous spending is now going to these patrols, nightlife and shots fired calls, which is adding up to more than \$700,000.</p> <p>"Those activities are taking a lot of the department's overtime," Council Central Staff Presenter Greg Doss said. "Through the first three months of the year, it has taken about 8,400 hours and about \$710,000."</p> <p>A big chunk of spending is going toward emphasis patrols, which were stepped up in areas like Pike and Pine downtown after a major shooting in 2020, leaving one dead and several others injured.</p> <p>The emphasis patrols are also focused on 12th and Jackson in Little Saigon, where Dong Nguyen has owned a restaurant for 15 years.</p> <p>"Every day right now I see the officers, they run around here," Nguyen said.</p> <p>Over the last two years, Nguyen says businesses here have given up and moved out because of the rampant drug dealing, break-ins and crime, but the area has recently been improving.</p> <p>Customers who were afraid to come to the area previously are now coming back, and police response has been better.</p> <p>"Sometimes right now, we still have they deal the drugs around here a little bit, but when we call the officers, they run away," Nguyen said.</p> <p>SPD is spending their stressed resources and hundreds of thousands of dollars to keep up with these emphasis patrols that were defunded last year, but no matter where the money is coming from, Nguyen says the patrols are still very much needed to keep problems out.</p> <p>"That's why it's very scary," Nguyen said. "I don't know when they'll move back here."</p> <p>City employees say SPD is also dealing with a labor shortage, putting extra pressure on the department to carefully choose what to prioritize, like violent crime and other critically urgent matters.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Spring is repeating a pattern
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/spring-is-repeating-a-pattern
GIST	<p>June 14, 2022 — You don't have to ask a visitor, "which side of the Rocky Mountains do you live on?" Just ask them if they enjoyed a cold, wet Spring or a blazing-hot and sometimes humid Spring. The country has been divided into two groups based on Spring Weather!</p> <p>A repetitive weather pattern has been persistent these last couple of months; broken record is a familiar term. The Jetstream that steers weather patterns continues to carve a large, cool trough of low pressure over the west and pushes a strong, warm ridge of high pressure up over the east.</p> <p>Much of the Southwest had record-breaking heat last week, and through the weekend. Salt Lake City hitting 102 broke the record set in 1918! And when Death Valley sets two days of record heat, there are clearly extremes at play.</p>

	<p>This week, the scorching heat is having high impact across the Midwest, Southeast and East Coast. It was so hot that the Weather Prediction Center posted a link to fondly recall a blizzard back in April. The temperature difference is incredible across the country The Pacific NW had near record breaking cold high temperatures for our weekend while the northern Rockies experienced heavy snow.</p> <p>Meanwhile, back in our coffee shops with hot drinks in June, the high temperatures have been 10 to 15 degrees below normal barely squeaking out highs in the upper 50s the last couple of days. Eastern WA had highs yesterday from 8 to 20 degrees below normal! Those came with a weekend of rain so heavy there have been flood watches, warnings, and advisories in place for more than 3 days. Idaho was included in the heavy rain and flooding along with very cool temperatures. Northeast Montana just got through a Winter Storm Warning for up to 2 feet of snow above 7000ft.</p> <p>Over the next 6-10 days, the cooler air and weather pattern for the northwest remains and is pushing into the overheated southwest for what many spots are experiencing in the 4 corners, 40-degree temperature drops. While the cool down occurs, there will be strong wind and plenty of thunderstorms too.</p> <p>We will hold steady with cooler and wetter than normal conditions through June. The biggest benefits: our grass has stayed green, the Spring flowers are having an extended bloom time, and our Fire Weather Season is delayed.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Climate change makes hard lives harder
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/world/asia/india-south-asia-climate-change.html
GIST	<p>FATEHGARH-SAHIB, India — When the unseasonably heavy rains flooded the fields, and then the equally unseasonable heat shriveled the seeds, it didn't just slash Ranjit Singh's wheat harvest by nearly half.</p> <p>It put him, and nearly all the other households in his village in northern India, that much further from financial stability in a country where a majority of people scratch out a living on farms. Like many Indian farmers, Mr. Singh is saddled with enormous debt and wondering how he will repay it, as a warming world makes farming ever more precarious.</p> <p>For India and other South Asian nations, home to hundreds of millions of humanity's most vulnerable, a seemingly bottomless well of challenges — poverty, food security, health, governance — has only deepened as the region bakes on the front lines of climate change.</p> <p>Global warming is no longer a distant prospect that officials with short electoral mandates can choose to look away from. The increasing volatility in weather patterns means a greater risk of disasters and severe economic damage for countries already straining to increase growth and development, and to move past the pandemic's devastation to lives and livelihoods.</p> <p>In Pakistan, which is grappling with an economic crisis and a political meltdown, a cholera outbreak in the southwest sent the local government scrambling, just as it was trying to quell massive forest fires.</p> <p>In Bangladesh, floods that came before the monsoons stranded millions of people, complicating longstanding efforts to improve the country's response to chronic flooding. In Nepal, officials are trying to drain about-to-burst glacial lakes before they wash away Himalayan villages facing a new phenomenon: too much rain, too little drinking water.</p> <p>And in India, which is the region's biggest grain supplier and provides hundreds of millions of its own citizens with food rations, the reduced wheat harvest has resurfaced longstanding concerns about food security and curbed the government's ambitions to feed the world.</p>

South Asia has always been hot, the monsoons always drenching. And it is far from alone in contending with new weather patterns. But this region, with nearly a quarter of the world's population, is experiencing such climatic extremes, from untimely heavy rain and floods to scorching temperatures and extended heat waves, that they are increasingly becoming the norm, not the exception.

"We used to wear jackets in March," said Mr. Singh, the farmer in Punjab, in India's north. "This year, from the first of March, we were using fans."

That March was the hottest month in India and Pakistan in 122 years of record-keeping, while rainfall was 60 to 70 percent below the norm, scientists say. The heat came earlier than usual this year, and temperatures stayed up — as high as 49 degrees Celsius, roughly 120 degrees Fahrenheit, in New Delhi in May.

Such a heat wave is 30 times as likely now as before the industrial age, estimates Krishna AchutaRao, a climate researcher at the Indian Institute of Technology. He said that if the globe warms to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial temperatures, from the current 1.2 degrees, such extreme patterns will come much more often — perhaps once every 50 years, or even every five.

With the extreme weather, the yield of India's national wheat harvest was down at least 3.5 percent this year, based on initial information. In Punjab, traditionally India's wheat basket, the drop was about 15 percent, with some districts seeing as much as a 30 percent decline.

In the Fatehgarh-Sahib area of Punjab, among the worst-hit, farmers like Mr. Singh faced a double calamity. Heavy rains came earlier and lasted longer than usual, inundating the fields. Those who managed to drain the water hoped the worst was over. But in March came the heat wave.

As its intensity became clear, the Indian government suddenly reversed a decision to expand wheat exports, with global supplies already reduced by the war in Ukraine. Officials cited rising international prices and the challenges of food security at home.

Malancha Chakrabarty, a researcher at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi who studies climate change and development, said India was "extremely vulnerable" to food security threats not just because of drops in production, but also because much of the population could struggle to afford food as prices rise.

"We are looking at a huge population which is on the borders of being extremely poor," Dr. Chakrabarty said. Despite significant progress in reducing extreme poverty, she said, many people are merely surviving and "wouldn't be able to take a shock."

The damage to the wheat crop has sent yet another tremor through India's underperforming agriculture sector. In many places, traditional crops are particularly vulnerable to the depletion of groundwater and erratic monsoons. Farmers and the government do not agree on how far to go in opening agriculture markets. Deep in debt, farmers are committing suicide in growing numbers.

The agrarian crisis has pushed many to the cities in search of other work. But India's economic growth, focused largely at the top, is not expanding employment opportunities. And much of the urban work is outdoor labor, which this year's extreme heat has made dangerous.

For those still on the farms, global warming is changing the very nature of what they put in the ground.

Agricultural scientists once focused on developing high-yield varieties to meet India's food needs, after a history of devastating famines. For the past couple of decades, the priority has been increasing crops' heat resistance. In labs, seeds are being tested at temperatures five degrees Celsius above those outside.

“It is a dilemma,” said Ratan Tiwari, who leads the biotechnology program at the Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research in Karnal. “Unless and until you are very sure the heat is going to be there, we will obviously not give a variety that is having heat tolerance but it is not the highest-yielding.”

The institute’s scientists have helped develop about 500 varieties of wheat seeds in the past few decades. What gives Mr. Tiwari and his fellow scientists hope is that overall, the varieties’ tolerance for heat is improving.

“Slowly, the genes are being accumulated in the favorable directions,” he said.

While the drop in the wheat harvest has affected India most directly, the shocks from climate change do not stop at international borders.

Bangladesh and Nepal are reliant on India for wheat imports. Rising tides wreak as much havoc in Bangladesh as in the neighboring Indian regions of Assam and West Bengal. When the water from heavy rains thunders down from the Himalayas, Nepali officials have to try to bring back the endangered rhinoceroses that are swept into India.

The problem with floods in Bangladesh is not new. With hundreds of rivers cutting through the nation of 170 million, rising waters displace hundreds of thousands every year.

The authorities have become better at saving lives through swift evacuations. But they are struggling to predict the timing of floods because of erratic monsoon patterns.

Rayhan Uddin, 35, from the Zakiganj area of Sylhet, Bangladesh, has a tree nursery, farms and about 6.5 acres of paddies. Since 2017, his home, paddy fields and decade-old nursery business have been washed away twice.

“I will have to start the nursery afresh,” he said. “The same happened five years ago.”

Nepal, where a quarter of the population lives below the poverty line, is perhaps the clearest example of how extremes of weather — floods and water shortages on one hand, increasing forest fires on the other — are disrupting life.

Villagers in the Himalayas accustomed to snow are now experiencing heavier rainfall, a phenomenon that is forcing many to migrate. Drinking water is also a major problem, as springs dry up with the reduction in snow melt.

Nepal’s agriculture ministry estimated that about 30 percent of arable land, mainly in hilly areas, was no longer being used. Across the country, forest fires have increased by almost tenfold over the past two decades.

Downstream, agriculture is increasingly uncertain and risky: Last year, paddy production was down nearly 10 percent, with tens of thousands of acres damaged by floods that killed scores of people.

The constant melting of snow due to rising temperatures has increased the number of glacial lakes by the hundreds, with about 20 identified as prone to bursting.

In 2016, the Nepal Army drained Imja Lake near Mount Everest to lower the risk to downstream populations. The authorities are trying to raise money for the immediate draining of four more lakes.

In Pakistan’s restive Baluchistan region, the evidence of an unusual spring was clear for weeks: The sky across several districts turned bright orange as a severe sandstorm blanketed the region. Forest fires on the province’s border burned for weeks, destroying an estimated two million pine and olive trees.

	<p>On top of the fires came pestilence. Panic gripped the mountain town of Pir Koh after a large number of people — most of them children — experienced diarrhea, vomiting and leg cramps. By the end of April, officials declared a cholera outbreak, which health officials said could be linked to rising temperatures. More than two dozen people died.</p> <p>While disease outbreaks, flooding and harvest disasters capture headlines, activists and experts warn about the toll of more constant, routine threats.</p> <p>“This is everyday climate change at work: a slow-onset shift in environmental conditions that is destroying lives and livelihoods before our eyes,” said a report outlining how tens of thousands of Bangladeshis lose their homes and crops to river erosion every year.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Britain hardline migration policy setback
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/world/europe/britain-asylum-seekers-rwanda.html
GIST	<p>LONDON — Last-minute legal challenges on Tuesday grounded a flight that was scheduled to take asylum seekers from Britain to Rwanda, in an unexpected setback to a new, hard-line migration policy from the British government and an eleventh-hour reprieve for those facing deportation.</p> <p>The decision to stop the flight came at the end of a day of uncertainty, as the small number of people who had been told they would still be on the plane made last-ditch challenges in several courts to resist removal from Britain.</p> <p>A ruling by the European Court of Human Rights effectively halted the deportations, dealing a significant blow to a new migration plan outlined by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose government has been embarrassed by the arrival of asylum seekers crossing into Britain from France on small boats.</p> <p>An aircraft, chartered at a cost of £500,000, according to British media reports, had been readied to take off from a military airport late Tuesday. But after a series of legal judgments, it did not leave on the 4,000-mile journey to Rwanda.</p> <p>Although Britain is no longer a member of the European Union, it is a member of the Council of Europe and a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, and therefore accepts judgments from the European Court of Human Rights, which is based in Strasbourg, France.</p> <p>In a statement, the home secretary, Priti Patel, said it was “very surprising that the European Court of Human Rights has intervened despite repeated earlier success in our domestic courts.”</p> <p>She added: “We will not be deterred from doing the right thing and delivering our plans to control our nation’s borders. Our legal team are reviewing every decision made on this flight and preparation for the next flight begins now.”</p> <p>In 2016, Mr. Johnson led the campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, arguing that it would allow the country to “take back control” of its borders, and the arrival of asylum seekers from France has presented a political problem for his government.</p> <p>Relations with the French government have been tense after Brexit. And, with limited cooperation with the French authorities, Mr. Johnson’s government has searched for other ways to curb the arrivals that have become an embarrassing symbol of Britain’s failure to police its post-Brexit frontiers.</p> <p>The British government announced in April that it had reached a deal with Rwanda that would allow the processing and settling of asylum seekers in the African country. In return, Britain would pay Rwanda 120 million pounds for economic development programs.</p>

The deal has provoked fierce opposition in Britain for being unworkable and unethical, including from religious figures, civil servants and — according to the Times of London — from [Prince Charles](#), the heir to the British throne.

After Tuesday's flight was grounded, Yolande Makolo, a spokeswoman for the Rwandan government, said it would not be deterred by the latest developments.

"Rwanda remains fully committed to making this partnership work," she said. "The current situation of people making dangerous journeys cannot continue as it is causing untold suffering to so many. Rwanda stands ready to receive the migrants when they do arrive and offer them safety and opportunity in our country."

Critics accuse Mr. Johnson, who [narrowly survived a vote of no confidence](#) last week, of deliberately stoking the issue for political advantage. They argue that even if very few asylum seekers are deported, the policy is intended to send a signal to voters that Britain is tough on those seeking to enter Britain by crossing the English Channel, many of them in small boats.

Yvette Cooper, who speaks for the opposition Labour Party on home affairs, said the government was "pursuing a policy they know isn't workable," but had paid Rwanda 120 million pounds and hired a jet that had not taken off because it wants to stoke a dispute and have "someone else to blame."

Earlier on Tuesday, Liz Truss, Britain's foreign secretary, told the LBC radio station that the flights should be seen in the larger context of illegal migration and of criminal gangs making money from bringing migrants into Britain.

The government, Ms. Truss said, needed to ensure "that if they are not on today's flight, they are on subsequent flights. But fundamentally, we need to break the business model, and that is why we have to take this action."

The debate over the Rwanda asylum plan comes at a time when immigration into Britain from non-European Union countries continues to rise.

Critics of the government say that British policy effectively criminalizes those who are trying to claim asylum, making it impossible for most genuine refugees to enter the country legally.

Last year, at least [27 people drowned](#) while trying to make the dangerous journey across the English Channel, one of the world's busiest shipping routes — and even that tragedy failed to deter more from trying to enter Britain on small boats.

In Rwanda, the deportation deal adds to efforts by [President Paul Kagame](#) to promote his country as a darling of donors, open to business and a partner in finding solutions to global migration. Mr. Kagame, 64, who came to power after [the 1994 genocide](#), has fashioned himself as a visionary bent on tackling poverty, reducing corruption and raising the profile of women.

He has also sent Rwandan troops to keep peace in troubled neighboring states and taken in [African refugees](#) who had faced brutal conditions in detention centers in Libya.

Yet Mr. Kagame's rule has been overshadowed by his government's record on human rights, which [drew concern](#) even from the British government last year.

Civil society groups have accused Mr. Kagame of cracking down on opposition figures, muzzling the news media and carrying out enforced disappearances and torture. Rwanda — alongside China, Turkey and Iran — has also been listed as one of the top countries that carry out "aggressive campaigns of [transnational repression](#)" by Freedom House, a U.S.-based nonprofit group.

	<p>This included the sentencing of Paul Rusesabagina, the dissident whose actions during the genocide were portrayed in the Oscar-nominated movie “Hotel Rwanda.” In a letter reviewed by The New York Times, the State Department last month declared Mr. Rusesabagina, a permanent resident of the United States, as “wrongfully detained” by Rwanda.</p> <p>Given this, the deportation deal with Mr. Johnson’s government risks legitimizing Mr. Kagame’s authoritarian streak, said Evan Easton-Calabria, a senior researcher at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University.</p> <p>The safety of the asylum seekers in Rwanda was also a concern, she said, adding that refugees had faced arrests, threats and killings there in the past. Nor is there any guarantee that those taken to Kigali, the capital, will stay there rather than trying to re-enter Europe via new routes. In the past, some of those moved to Rwanda under an Israeli plan left the country.</p> <p>“There’s a real risk in letting these flights go ahead,” said Dr. Easton-Calabria, who has worked with refugees in Uganda. “The risk is that a lot of people will remain completely unassisted, completely traumatized in a country where they don’t have any connections and don’t know the language.”</p> <p>The plan for migrant deportations also come as Rwanda is engaged in a diplomatic standoff with the Democratic Republic of Congo, which accused Kigali of supporting the M23 rebel group that it is battling.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Battle for Donbas reaches critical moment
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/14/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#the-battle-for-control-of-the-donbas-reaches-a-critical-moment
GIST	<p>The desperate struggle by Ukraine to hold on to its territory in the eastern Donbas region reached a critical point on Tuesday, as Ukrainian and Russian soldiers clashed in street battles in the city of Sievierodonetsk and the last bridge linking the city with Ukrainian-controlled territory to the west was destroyed.</p> <p>After weeks of intense fighting, Russia appeared closer than ever to claiming Sievierodonetsk, potentially handing President Vladimir V. Putin a substantial victory he can present to the Russian people. It could also help him come a step closer to his aim of taking complete control of the strategically important Donbas region, his primary military goal after his forces failed to seize the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and other big cities.</p> <p>With the prospect of Sievierodonetsk falling to Russia and increasingly urgent pleas by Ukraine to the West for longer-range weapons, the situation was also raising concerns among some Western officials about whether President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has a viable strategy to win the war.</p> <p>France, Italy and Germany, among the continent’s biggest and richest countries, are anxious about a long war or one that could become frozen in a stalemate. They are also nervous about the possible damage to their own economies as countries in Europe grapple with rising inflation and gas prices.</p> <p>But a day before 40 Western allies are scheduled to meet in Brussels to discuss Ukraine’s increasingly desperate plea for more heavy weaponry, a top Pentagon official insisted that the United States would not press Ukraine into negotiating a cease-fire.</p> <p>“We’re not going to tell the Ukrainians how to negotiate, what to negotiate and when to negotiate,” Colin H. Kahl, the under secretary of defense for policy, said on Tuesday. “They’re going to set those terms for themselves.”</p> <p>Russian forces and their separatist allies control an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the Donbas, according to Ukrainian officials. Donbas, which comprises the territories of Luhansk and Donetsk, makes up about nine percent of Ukraine’s land, but is an important industrial and cultural region for the country.</p>

Sievierodonetsk is the biggest city in Luhansk not yet under Moscow's control.

With hundreds of civilians trapped in the city under unrelenting bombardment, the destruction of the bridge could also create an intensifying humanitarian crisis, since Ukrainian forces are now hobbled in their ability to retreat or evacuate civilians and the wounded. Ukrainian officials said Russian forces have also been making targeted attacks on the city's Azot chemical plant, where local officials say about 500 civilians have been sheltering.

Ukraine has been losing as many as 200 soldiers a day in street-by-street fight in "dead cities" like Sievierodonetsk in a last-ditch bid to try to inflict as many casualties as possible on Russia. But a war of attrition favors Russia, which has a much larger military. Mr. Zelensky has acknowledged that Russia has far more troops to lose and that Mr. Putin views them as "cannon fodder."

As Ukrainian officials insist that they need more long-range weapons from the West and that the heavy arms already promised to them have been slow to arrive, the grinding war is also testing the political will in Europe and the United States as the war exacerbates global economic troubles.

For weeks, Russian forces have assaulted Sievierodonetsk from the east, north and south, pounding it with artillery in an attempt to drive Ukrainian troops toward the river to the west. In fierce street fighting, they took a hotel and bus station in the northeast of the city, Ukrainian officials said, and have since fought their way toward the center.

The mayor of Sievierodonetsk, Oleksandr Stryuk, said on national television that the situation was "very difficult." "Russian troops are trying to storm the city, but the military is holding firm," he said, adding that despite the lack of bridges, civilian evacuations were still being carried out.

On Tuesday, Russia's ministry of defense offered to allow a humanitarian corridor to evacuate civilians from the Azot chemical plant. Moscow has made similar offers in the past in other parts of the country that have not come to fruition. Nevertheless, such an arrangement was reached to allow civilians to leave a steel plant in the southern port of Mariupol where the last Ukrainian defenders of the city were holding out.

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HEADLINE	06/14 US: will not pressure Ukraine to negotiate
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/14/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#us-will-not-push-ukraine-to-reach-a-cease-fire-a-top-pentagon-official-says
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The United States will not pressure Ukraine into negotiating a cease-fire even as Russia grinds out steady gains on the ground in the country's embattled east, a top Pentagon official said on Tuesday.</p> <p>"We're not going to tell the Ukrainians how to negotiate, what to negotiate and when to negotiate," said Colin H. Kahl, the under secretary of defense for policy. "They're going to set those terms for themselves."</p> <p>Mr. Kahl's comments came as Ukraine's attempt to hold on to its territory in the eastern Donbas region reached a critical juncture on Tuesday, with Ukrainian and Russian soldiers clashing in street battles in the city of Sievierodonetsk and Russia edging closer to claiming the city. Russian forces and their separatist allies control an estimated 80 to 90 percent of the Donbas, according to Ukrainian officials, giving the Kremlin potential leverage in future negotiations.</p> <p>Speaking at a security conference in Washington held by the Center for a New American Security, Mr. Kahl reaffirmed the American commitment to helping Ukraine defend itself. "Our role is to help them make sure that they can defend themselves against the Russian onslaught," he said, "and they've been doing an unbelievably courageous job at that, and to strengthen their hand whenever the negotiations do happen."</p>

Despite Mr. Kahl's strong words of support, the war has entered its fourth month, and the remarkable initial unity in response to Russia's invasion seems to be fraying among some Western allies who have shipped lethal weapons to Ukraine and imposed a broad array of financial sanctions on Russia.

Leaders in Central and Eastern Europe, with its long experience of Soviet domination, have strong views about the need to tame Russia — even rejecting the idea of speaking to Mr. Putin. But France, Italy and Germany, among the continent's biggest and richest countries, are anxious about a long war or one that could become frozen in a stalemate. They are also nervous about the possible damage to their own economies as countries in Europe grapple with [rising inflation](#) and [gas prices](#).

On Tuesday, a day before 40 Western allies are scheduled to meet in Brussels to discuss Ukraine's increasingly desperate plea for more heavy weaponry to offset Moscow's deadly long-range artillery, Mr. Kahl sought to downplay the Russian military gains in the Luhansk portion of the industrially important Donbas region, which comprises the territories of Luhansk and Donetsk.

"To some degree that is true, although the gains are really on any given day measured in blocks. They are not large sweeping breakthroughs of Ukrainian defenses," Mr. Kahl said. "The Ukrainians remain stalwart defenders. There are significant casualties, but that is true on both sides."

Administration officials in recent years have sought to calibrate and balance two oft-conflicting goals. The first is that Ukraine must emerge as a vibrant, democratic state — exactly what Mr. Putin is seeking to crush. The second is Mr. Biden's oft-repeated goal of avoiding direct conflict with Russia — what he has repeatedly called World War III.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Ukraine forces claim gains in the south
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/06/14/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#ukrainian-forces-claim-gains-in-the-south-bringing-them-to-within-12-miles-of-occupied-kherson
GIST	<p>As its forces struggle against the power of Russia's vast arsenal of heavy artillery in the east, the Ukrainian military claimed on Tuesday to be outmaneuvering Russian forces in the south, steadily reclaiming towns and villages and bringing its forces to within 12 miles of the Russian-occupied city of Kherson.</p> <p>A lack of heavy artillery has slowed the Ukrainian effort in the south and makes it unlikely that Ukraine will launch a broader offensive soon to try to take back the city. But Russian forces are contending not only with the Ukrainian military, but also with a growing insurgency made up of civilians and former soldiers.</p> <p>"The enemy continues to fight, but our units are gradually forcing him to liberate positions and test the strength of the second and third lines of defense, and in some cases to retreat further," the Ukrainian southern military command said in a statement.</p> <p>The Russians do not comment on military setbacks and have portrayed the occupied regions as stable and benefiting from Moscow's embrace.</p> <p>Unable to advance in the south since the first weeks of the war, the Russians have focused on fortifying their positions and launching long-range strikes against Ukrainian military targets and the civilian population.</p> <p>Serhii Khlan, the head of Ukraine's Kherson regional military administration, said the Ukrainians had scored a number of tactical victories that would enable its forces to launch a broader counteroffensive when the time was right.</p> <p>He said that the front in this pocket of fighting stretched over a dozen miles, with the Russians pushed back to "positions that were inconvenient and not equipped for defense," and that the battles were being</p>

	<p>fought between two villages west of the city of Kherson, the only provincial capital taken by Russian forces early in the war.</p> <p>While both sides have suffered heavy losses and neither seems poised to deliver anything resembling a decisive blow, the fighting remains intense in many places. Active fighting has been reported along more than 680 miles of the long and twisting front between Ukrainian and Russian forces, the commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Valeriy Zaluzhny, said this week.</p> <p>As Ukraine's forces press on the city of Kherson from the west, its military said it was also engaging the Russians in the northern reaches of the occupied territory.</p> <p>There has been fighting around Davydiv Brid, an area about 100 miles north of Kherson, over control of a highway that is critical to Russian logistical operations. Two weeks ago, the Ukrainian military reported that the Russians had blown up bridges over the Inhulets River to slow the Ukrainian advance. On Tuesday, the Ukrainian military said it had discovered that much of the riverbank was mined.</p> <p>In Beryslav, a village on the west bank of the Dnipro River about 50 miles north of the city of Kherson, Ukraine said the entire district was under fire. "Retreating, the occupiers resorted to looting and harassment of local residents," the Ukrainian military said.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	06/14 Digital indoor mapping for first responders
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/dhs/new-digital-indoor-mapping-capability-now-available-for-first-responders/
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) funded the development of a cloud-based capability that enables first responders to review and analyze indoor floor plans in real-time when responding to incidents. Mappedin Response was developed in collaboration with Mappedin Inc. of Waterloo, Ontario, and is available to first responders and local governments as a licensed cloud-based service.</p> <p>"It has been a major challenge for first responders to quickly determine the layouts of structures, hindering them from making informed decisions before entering a building," said Kathryn Coulter Mitchell, DHS Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary for Science and Technology. "Mappedin Response provides the ability to conduct a 360-degree assessment with digitized floor-plans, better positioning responders to take necessary precautions and ensure they have the necessary equipment and tools to act more effectively in protecting people, property, and their own lives."</p> <p>With Mappedin Response, first responders can create, update and maintain a digital "warehouse" of 3D floorplans they can access on tablets and mobile devices, eliminating the need to rely on outdated hard-copy floorplans and maps. In addition, responders can add key information such as the building's construction materials, locations of fire hydrants, and the presence of hazardous materials. During the development of Mappedin Response, S&T and Mappedin incorporated feedback from first responders and local government across the United States and Canada while developing the software.</p> <p>"This new tool will also help federal, state and local communities plan for different types of incidents, which is an essential element of effective response by any first responder agency," said Anthony Caracciolo, S&T First Responder Capability Program Manager. "For example, the Mappedin Response platform will complement detection and tracking technologies, such as sensors that can detect gunshots or the presence of life, allowing these systems to overlay their specific outputs onto a floor plan. This</p>

	provides first responders a holistic view of what they are dealing with so they can coordinate their plans accordingly.”
Return to Top	<i>Local government and first responders who need to digitize and have their floor plans available online should contact MappedIn Inc.</i>

HEADLINE	06/14 Ransomware hit south Africa supermarkets
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/large-supermarket-chain-in-southern-africa-hit-with-ransomware/
GIST	<p>One of the largest supermarket chains serving multiple countries across southern Africa has been hit with ransomware.</p> <p>The Shoprite Group released a statement late last week announcing a cyberattack. The RansomHouse ransomware group took credit for the attack on Tuesday.</p> <p>The company – which has more than 2,943 stores across Africa and over 149,000 employees – said it “became aware of a suspected data compromise, impacting on a specific subset of data and which may affect some customers who engaged in money transfers to and within Eswatini and within Namibia and Zambia.”</p> <p>“Affected customers will receive an SMS to the cell number supplied at the time of the transaction,” the company explained.</p> <p>“Access to affected areas of the network has also been locked down. The data compromise included names and ID numbers, but no financial information or bank account numbers.”</p> <p>The company added that it amended “authentication processes” as well as “fraud prevention and detection strategies” in an effort to protect customer information.</p> <p>The Shoprite Group did not respond to requests for comment, but said it has notified South Africa’s Information Regulator about the incident.</p> <p>It warned customers that the stolen data may be used to scam them and urged people to never share personal information like passwords over email, phone or text.</p> <p>RansomHouse openly touted their attack on the supermarket chain, claiming on their Telegram channel that the company “was keeping enormous amounts of personal data in plain text/raw photos packed in archived files, completely unprotected.”</p> <p>The gang published a sample of the data it stole and said it “invited” the company to negotiate a ransom.</p> <p>“The only thing they did is change their passwords like it solves everything. If their position doesn’t change, most of this data will be sold with something disclosed to the public,” the group threatened.</p> <p>“Apart from KYC data, we also got lots of other interesting stuff from the company. Yes, they like to keep a lot of things unprotected.”</p> <p>The group previously took credit for ransomware attacks on the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, Jefferson Credit Union, AHS Aviation Handling Services and others.</p> <p>A Cyberint report last month said the group did not see itself as a ransomware gang and instead claimed to be a platform for other ransomware gangs.</p> <p>Emsisoft threat analyst Brett Callow told <i>The Record</i> that the group is associated with the White Rabbit ransomware. The ransomware family emerged in January and has ties to an APT group called FIN8, according to Trend Micro.</p>

	<p>“RansomHouse claims simply to provide a platform for the actors who carry out attacks. It’s more likely, however, that they’re the ones carrying out attacks and using White Rabbit ransomware,” Callow said.</p> <p>Supermarkets have become a frequent target for hackers, with the largest supermarket chain in Trinidad suffering from a cyberattack last month that caused outages at all of its locations throughout the country.</p> <p>Last July, one of Sweden’s largest supermarket store chains, Coop, was forced to shut down nearly 800 stores across the country after one of its contractors was hit by ransomware in the aftermath of the wide-ranging Kaseya security incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 BSA: work-from-home software piracy
SOURCE	https://torrentfreak.com/ghost-piracy-work-from-home-software-piracy-worries-bsa-220615/
GIST	<p>Over the past decades, the Software Alliance (BSA) has helped major software companies including Adobe, Autodesk, IBM, and Microsoft, to fight against under-licensed businesses.</p> <p>This has resulted in raids and audits at companies worldwide, with computers carefully inspected to see if the businesses have paid their dues.</p> <p>The BSA often relies on tips from insiders, who can earn serious cash if their information pays off. In addition, the Software Alliance also works closely with law enforcement authorities around the world to keep piracy in check.</p> <p>During the pandemic, the work situation at many companies changed, as employees increasingly began working work from home. This, paired with travel restrictions, slowed down BSA’s anti-piracy efforts.</p> <p>Raids Target ‘Pirate’ Businesses</p> <p>This year the enforcement pace has stepped up again. The Software Alliance has been particularly active in Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, for example, the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs conducted its ninth raid this month.</p> <p>The businesses targeted in these raids include an interior design firm and a design and build company, but also companies in the manufacturing precision engineering and construction industries.</p> <p>Together, these companies had more than \$150,000 in unlicensed software installed on their systems. In addition, the enforcement officers also found that most of the computers used by interns had pirated software installed.</p> <p>Animation Studio Employee Tips Off BSA</p> <p>In Thailand, meanwhile, the BSA received a tip from an employee at an animation studio that does work for a global streaming platform. This tip was passed on to the Economic and Cyber Crime police, which raided the business.</p> <p>While searching the premises in Bangkok, officers noticed that employees who worked from home used remote-control tools to access pirated and hacked software at the company.</p> <p>On 15 of the 20 computers, they found unlicensed copies of Autodesk Maya, which is used for movie and animation special effects. The value of the pirated software added up to almost \$200,000.</p> <p>“To the detriment of cyber security and rule of law, we believe companies have found ways to access illegal software even during remote work,” says BSA Senior Director, Tarun Sawney, commenting on this trend.</p> <p>‘Ghost Piracy’</p>

	<p>Accessing pirated software through a remote connection is no worse than doing so at the office. However, BSA appears have a new name for this trend, which is labeled “Ghost Piracy” in a press release.</p> <p>“The act of remotely accessing unlicensed software, described as ‘ghost piracy’, is said to be taking place among design, creative, animation and engineering professionals in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, to name a few.”</p> <p>Although Ghost Piracy in itself already sounds quite spooky, the BSA has an even darker scenario. Pirated software doesn’t only hurt the rightsholders but it also puts the public at large in danger.</p> <p>Pirate Bridges and Cracked Roads</p> <p>The Software Alliance theorizes that, if national governments allow companies to build crucial infrastructure such as roads and bridges using cracked software, only trouble lies ahead.</p> <p>“No creator can come up with quality design using illegal software and when these designs are for the roads, bridges, rail lines and infrastructure then companies are also taking great risk,” Sawney says.</p> <p>“There should be no tolerance for firms using any illegal software in national development. These are substantial businesses winning lucrative contracts. Shortcuts using cracked software should never be accepted nor allowed,” he adds.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Hacktivists: Belarus wiretapped embassies
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/belarusian-hacktivist-group-releases-purported-belarusian-wiretapped-audio-of-russian-embassy/
GIST	<p>A Belarusian hacktivist group on Tuesday released what it says is wiretapped audio of foreign embassies, consulates and other calls in Belarus gathered surreptitiously by the Belarusian Ministry of Internal Affairs.</p> <p>Announced in the Belarusian Cyber Partisans’ Telegram channel late morning U.S. time Tuesday, the first release is a four-and-a-half minute long video posted to YouTube containing what the group says is audio of recordings captured from the Russian embassy and the Russian consulate sometime between 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>The group said it is not publishing conversations in full and hiding some data about call participants “out of respect for the personal conversations of people who are not connected with the dictatorship in Belarus,” according to a Google translation of the message.</p> <p>An email sent to the Russian foreign ministry with a request for comment was not returned. The Belarus embassy in the U.S. did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>“The ‘brotherly’ state turns out to be not so brotherly after all.”</p> <p>The group tweeted Tuesday that there “are still a lot of recordings of embassies and consulates of other countries. We will continue to reveal the Lkushenka’s regime’s dark secrets. Many interesting leaks soon.”</p> <p>A representative of the group told CyberScoop through its Telegram channel that the Cyber Partisans have around 1.5 terabytes of voice calls, which they equates to roughly 50,000 hours. They said “most” of the calls are unrelated to embassies, and that among the phone numbers in the system “there are more than 22k orgs and 49k persons.”</p> <p>Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has been a steadfast ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. He has allowed Belarus to not only serve as a way point and staging ground for Russian military assets deployed as part of the Russian war on Ukraine, but also taken a series of other steps to show loyalty to</p>

Putin. Hackers either based in Belarus or working as part of the Belarusian government have also participated in hacks against Ukrainian targets in conjunction with the Russian military effort, [industry experts have said](#).

In December 2021 Lukashenko described the relationship between Belarus and Russia as “brotherly,” a statement the Belarusian Cyber Partisans mocked Tuesday.

“The ‘brotherly’ state turns out to be not so brotherly after all,” the group wrote in the description section of the YouTube video.

The Belarusian Cyber Partisans are a group of roughly two dozen or so former IT specialists and others with deep connections to the Belarusian government. Their [stated goal](#) is toppling Lukashenko and his regime which they say is responsible for horrific and ongoing human and civil rights abuses in Belarus by exposing corruption and other malfeasance.

In July 2021 the group [claimed in its Telegram channel](#) to have hacked the internal surveillance video system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. “The resistance tells you that your internal systems are no longer internal and that you will stand trial in the new Belarus for your atrocities,” the group wrote at the time, according to a Google translation. “All will be established — by divisions, by minutes, by name.”

Shortly after the Feb. 24 Russian escalation of its attack on Ukraine, the [Cyber Partisans claimed](#) to have hacked the Belarusian rail system to slow Russian military equipment movement through Belarus, which borders Russia to the east and Ukraine to its south.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Backdoor cloning campaign targets crypto
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/malware/new-backdoor-cloning-campaign-sneaks-into-mobile-wallets-steals-cryptocurrency
GIST	<p>A new malware campaign has just been uncovered that sends fraudulent versions of legitimate sites to mobile wallets, in order to ultimately steal users’ cryptocurrency.</p> <p>Digital advertising security company Confiant reported in a June 12 blog that it found a widespread campaign where “backdoor versions” of Apple iOS and Android Web3 wallets have been breached by cloned ads for real web sites.</p> <p>When the fraudulent links are downloaded by a user, the malware not only compromises the use of the real financial applications, but exfiltrates “seed phrases” that are then used to abscond with cryptocurrency held by the victims, the blog said.</p> <p>Researchers said that Seaflower is “the most technically sophisticated threat targeting web3 users, right after the infamous Lazarus Group,” according to Confiant’s blog.</p> <p>“Cryptocurrency is rapidly becoming a battlefield for global cyber actors who target crypto owners through multiple channels,” said Chris Olson, co-founder and CEO of The Media Trust, a digital privacy provider. “While many are waking up to the danger of email-based phishing scams, few are prepared for SEO and web-based attacks that target internet traffic and mobile users.”</p> <p>While it is still unclear who is responsible for mounting what appears to be this very slick malware campaign, Confiant estimated that it is likely a Chinese cybercriminal group, since much of the data connected to the malware is in Chinese and it contains Chinese and Hong Kong-based IP addresses. Indeed, this trojanized malware activity was called “Seaflower” because by following the path of one the injected files, researchers found the macOS username “Zhang Haike,” which in turn led to many Chinese-speaking references, including a character in a Chinese novel called “Tibetan Sea Flower.” SeaFlower campaigns have been identified as going as far back as March 2022.</p>

The research indicated that currently SeaFlower is mainly focused on “modify[ing] [web3 wallets](#) with backdoor code that ultimately exfiltrates the seed phrase,” targeting Coinbase, MetaMask, TokenPocket and imToken wallets in particular. Although the Confiant blog also noted that all those wallets can be used safely, “but like any other good and very popular software, they are exposed to modding, reverse engineering, and backdoors.”

James McQuiggan, security awareness advocate at [KnowBe4](#), pointed out that “going after the money is the No. 1 target for cybercriminals.”

And the more sophisticated groups are constantly innovating, “finding new ways to target cryptocurrency ... like doppelganger webpages. Cybercriminals are creating copies and making the wallet appear legitimate when they've designed them to steal credentials and access information,” McQuiggan added.

“Since crypto wallets are not federally protected, if a cybercriminal gains access to someone's crypto wallet or account, they can quickly move the funds to their accounts.”

Hence, applications should only be downloaded from reputable online stores like the Apple App Store or Google Play Store to reduce the risk of installing malicious applications designed to steal from the user,” McQuiggan advised.

For his part, Olson encouraged caution among NFT and crypto users. “This incident has three implications: First, web and mobile devices are growing as threat surfaces. Second, foreign actors can leverage those surfaces to target users around the world. Finally, Web3 may be vulnerable to the same threats that have made Web 2.0 unsafe for years, unless early adopters of the technology commit to minimal standards of digital safety and trust.”

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HEADLINE	06/15 Account takeovers surge financial services
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/bnpl-fraud-alert-as-account/
GIST	<p>Account takeover (ATO) attacks targeting the financial services sector surged 58% from April to May this year, raising fears that fraudsters are focusing more on buy now, pay later (BNPL) schemes.</p> <p>BNPL has become increasingly popular as the cost-of-living crisis bites, enabling consumers to buy the products they want by splitting purchases into smaller, interest-free payments.</p> <p>The global market is predicted to be worth a staggering \$4tn by 2030, with Apple recently announcing a move into the space.</p> <p>However, Imperva warned that new and emerging sectors like BNPL are often favorite targets of fraudsters, as they may initially have gaps in security and regulation which can be exploited.</p> <p>Both ATO and new account fraud (NAF) could impact the BNPL sector.</p> <p>“[ATO] occurs when a fraudster takes over an existing BNPL account and uses it to make unauthorized purchases,” Imperva explained in a blog post.</p> <p>“This can either be done by taking over the BNPL account directly, or by taking over a user account with a business that is authorized to charge their BNPL account; like an online retailer for example. This creates an even bigger attack surface and allows fraudsters to act with more flexibility.”</p> <p>As such, consumers, merchants, BNPL providers and banks – which pay the merchant up front for BNPL purchases – are potentially exposed to this type of fraud.</p>

	<p>In a NAF context, fraudsters use stolen and synthetic data to create new fake BNPL accounts to make purchases.</p> <p>The financial services sector has traditionally been a major target for ATO, representing 35% of attacks recorded in Imperva's <i>Bad Bot Report 2022</i>. It was closely followed by travel and retail (both 34%).</p> <p>The report revealed ATO surging 148% year-on-year across all sectors in 2021.</p> <p>“Successful ATO attacks and [NAF] harm everyone involved in the transaction. For consumers, they can end up hundreds or thousands of pounds out of pocket, and potentially find their credit scores trashed as part of the bargain. Even if the money is recovered, the psychological toll can still be profound,” argued Imperva senior product manager, Lynn Marks.</p> <p>“For businesses, they not only risk losing the entire value of the loan, but also incurring significant additional costs to support victims and investigate fraud claims, increased customer churn, and reputational damage for allowing accounts to be compromised.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Android malware 2M downloads Play Store
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/android-malware-on-the-google-play-store-gets-2-million-downloads/
GIST	<p>Cybersecurity researchers have discovered adware and information-stealing malware on the Google Play Store last month, with at least five still available and having amassed over two million downloads.</p> <p>Adware infections displaying unwanted advertisements that can be particularly intrusive, degrade the user experience, deplete the battery, generate heat, and even cause unauthorized charges.</p> <p>This software generally tries to hide by masquerading as something else on the host device and makes money for remote operators by forcing the victim to perform views or clicks on affiliated advertisements.</p> <p>However, information-stealing Trojans are far more nefarious, stealing login credentials for other sites you frequent, including your social media and online banking accounts.</p> <p>Infiltrating the Google Play Store</p> <p>Analysts at Dr. Web antivirus report that adware apps and data-stealing Trojans were among the most prominent Android threats in May 2022.</p> <p>At the top of the report are spyware apps that can steal information from other apps' notifications, primarily to snatch one-time 2FA passcodes (OTP) and take over accounts.</p> <p>Among the many threats that managed to infiltrate the Google Play Store, the following five are still available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIP Pic Camera Photo Editor – 1 million downloads, malware masquerading as image-editing software, but which steals the Facebook account credentials of its users. • Wild & Exotic Animal Wallpaper – 500,000 downloads, an adware trojan that replaces its icon and name to 'SIM Tool Kit' and adds itself to the battery-saving exceptions list. • ZodiHoroscope – Fortune Finder – 500,000 downloads, malware that steal Facebook account credentials by tricking users into entering them, supposedly to disable in-app ads. • PIP Camera 2022 – 50,000 downloads, camera effects app that is also a Facebook account hijacker. • Magnifier Flashlight – 10,000 downloads, adware app that serves videos and static banner ads. <p>Bleeping Computer has contacted Google to inform them about the above applications and verify if the existing versions were cleaned and resubmitted or are still as dangerous as described in Dr. Web's report.</p>

	<p>However, judging from recent user reviews, these apps are still demonstrating malicious functionality and don't deliver on their features promises.</p> <p>Other applications spotted by Dr. Web's antivirus team on the Play Store in May 2022 include a racing game, a deleted image recovery tool, a fake state compensation app targeting Russian users, and a "free access" app for the Only Fans platform.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 BlackCat website to check for stolen data
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-gang-creates-site-for-employees-to-search-for-their-stolen-data/
GIST	<p>The ALPHV ransomware gang, aka BlackCat, has brought extortion to a new level by creating a dedicated website that allows the customers and employees of their victim to check if their data was stolen in an attack</p> <p>When ransomware gangs conduct attacks, they quietly steal corporate data. After harvesting everything of value, the threat actor starts to encrypt devices.</p> <p>The stolen data is then used in double-extortion schemes, where the hackers demand a ransom payment to deliver a decryptor and prevent the public release of corporate data.</p> <p>To pressure victims into paying, ransomware gangs create data leak sites where they slowly release portions of the stolen data or email customers and employees warning them that their info was stolen.</p> <p>However, these extortion techniques do not always work and companies simply decide not to pay even though their corporate, employee, and customer data is at risk of being leaked.</p> <p>For this reason, ransomware gangs constantly evolve their tactics to apply additional pressure on victims.</p> <p>Taking extortion to the next level</p> <p>Today, the AlphV/BlackCat ransomware operation began releasing allegedly stolen data that they claim was stolen from a hotel and spa in Oregon.</p> <p>As part of this attack, the ransomware gang claims to have stolen 112GB of data, including employee information, such as Social Security Numbers, for 1,500 employees.</p> <p>However, instead of just leaking the data on their normal Tor data leak site, the ransomware gang took it a step further and created a dedicated website allowing employees and customers to check if their data was stolen during the attack on the hotel.</p> <p>Using this site, employees, customers, or anyone for that matter, can see information about hotel guests and their stays or the personal data of 1,534 employees.</p> <p>While the customer guest data only contains names, arrival date, and stay costs, the employee data includes extremely sensitive information, such as names, Social Security Numbers, date of birth, phone numbers, and email addresses.</p> <p>The threat actors even went as far as to create "data packs" for each employee that contain files related to that person's employment at the hotel.</p> <p>As this site is hosted on the clear web, i.e. the public internet, it is indexable by search engines, and the exposed information will likely be added to search results, potentially making this even worse for victims.</p> <p>Innovative or a waste of time?</p>

	<p>The goal of this site is clear, to scare employees and guests into demanding the hotel remove their data from the web, which can only be done by paying a ransom.</p> <p>Emisosft security analyst Brett Callow, who discovered this new extortion strategy and shared it with BleepingComputer, said that while the tactic is innovative, it is too early to tell if it will pay off. "Alphv is no doubt hoping that this tactic will increase the probability of them monetizing attacks. If companies know that information relating to their customers and employees will be made public in this manner, they may be more inclined to pay the demand to prevent it from happening - and to avoid potentially being hit with class action lawsuits," Callow told BleepingComputer in a conversation.</p> <p>"While it's an innovative approach, it remains to be seen whether the strategy will be successful - and, of course, that will determine whether it becomes more commonplace."</p> <p>AlphV is believed to be a rebrand of the DarkSide/BlackMatter gang responsible for the attack on Colonial Pipeline, which thrust these hacking groups into the media's attention and focused the full attention of international law enforcement and the US government.</p> <p>This ransomware gang has always been considered one of the top-tier ransomware operations. However, they are also known for the mess-ups and crazy ideas that get them in trouble.</p> <p>Setting up this website with individual employee data packs was definitely a time-consuming task for the ransomware gang. We will have to wait and see whether the effort pays off.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Beware the 'secret agent' cloud middleware
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/cloud/beware-the-secret-agent-cloud-middleware
GIST	<p>RSA CONFERENCE 2022 – If cloud services weren't complicated enough for the typical business today to properly configure and secure, there's also a lesser-known layer of middleware that cloud providers run that can harbor hidden security flaws.</p> <p>Researchers from Wiz.io last week at RSA Conference in San Francisco unveiled an open source, cloud middleware database on GitHub that details the specific middleware agents that Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google, and Microsoft install on their cloud customers' virtual machines. The goal is to shine a light on this traditionally hidden proprietary software layer and its potential software flaws that can leave a cloud customer unknowingly at risk of attack.</p> <p>Cloud providers often silently install these "secret agent" middleware programs on their customers' virtual machines, and with the highest privileges, as a "bridge" between their cloud services and their customers' VMs. The Cloud Middleware Dataset database project aims to provide cloud customers insight into this layer of software they rarely know exists on their virtual machines in a cloud service — and the potential security risks associated with it.</p> <p>"These agents are adding an additional attack surface and cloud customers don't know about those agents ...; most are installed silently. If they come pre-installed, they have no idea" either, Shir Tamari, head of research at Wiz.io, told Dark Reading in an interview at the RSA Conference last week.</p> <p>The most high-profile example of cloud middleware gone wrong was the discovery of major flaws in Microsoft Azure's Open Management Infrastructure (OMI) agent software last fall. Tamari and his fellow researchers unearthed major remote execution and privilege escalation vulns in Azure, with a collection of flaws they dubbed OMIGOD. OMI runs on many Linux VMs in Azure to provide configuration management functions for cloud customers.</p> <p>Of the four OMIGOD vulnerabilities (CVE-2021-38647, CVE-2021-38648, CVE-2021-38645, and CVE-2021-38649), the most painful one was CVE-2021-38647, which could allow an attacker to gain root on a VM with a single packet, merely by stripping the authentication header. The problem: A default</p>

configuration for OMI was exposed the HTTPS management port on the public Internet. Microsoft provided auto-updates for Azure to address the flaws, after initially releasing patches that most Azure customers had no idea applied to them since they weren't aware of OMI.

"There was confusion over how to handle this middleware" patching, Tamari said.

The Cloud Middleware Dataset so far includes several agents used in Azure in addition to OMI, such as Microsoft Azure Guest Agent (WALinuxAgent), which is preconfigured in all Azure Linux images and has root privileges. WALinuxAgent's listing in the database notes that the agent previously contained an information disclosure vulnerability, [CVE-2019-0804](#). If exploited, it could allow an attacker to access memory in the kernel from a user process.

Other Azure middleware detailed in the database are Operations Management Suite, dependency agent, pipelines agent, and RD Agent service, each of which is employed in various Azure services.

AWS, meanwhile, has four such middleware agents listed in the dataset, AWS Systems Manager Agent (SSM Agent), AWS PV Drivers, AWS ECS container agent, and AWS EC2 Hibernation Initialization Agent. A local privilege escalation flaw [CVE-2022-29527](#) was found this year in SSM Agent that an attacker could use to gain root access. That agent comes preconfigured in Windows, Linux, and macOS VM images.

Google Cloud runs Accounts Daemon, OSConfig agent, and a guest agent in its cloud services, all of which are Linux-based. OSConfig and guest also run on Windows. Accounts Daemon, which works in Google's OS Login service, previously was patched for a local privilege escalation flaw, [CVE-2020-8933](#), that would have given root access. OSConfig, which is built into GCP VM images, also had [a local privilege escalation vuln](#) in 2020 that Google later fixed.

What to Ask About Cloud Middleware

So, how can organizations pinpoint these "secret agents," as Wiz researchers refer to them?

In an interview with Dark Reading at RSAC, Wiz co-founder and CTO Ami Luttwak said organizations should ask questions of cloud providers to get a clear view of what their software environment looks like: "Whose middleware is it [and] how do you know if it's running on your environment" and does the software contain vulnerabilities, and how are updates and patches handled?

"This is a different attack surface. It's a gray area," he said. "It needs transparency and a clear process for updates for agents, VMs."

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HEADLINE	06/14 Record breaking HTTPS DDoS attack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cloudflare-mitigates-record-breaking-https-ddos-attack/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Internet infrastructure firm Cloudflare said today that it mitigated a 26 million request per second distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack, the largest HTTPS DDoS attack detected to date.</p> <p>The record-breaking attack occurred last week and targeted one of Cloudflare's customers using the Free plan.</p> <p>The threat actor behind it likely used hijacked servers and virtual machines seeing that the attack originated from Cloud Service Providers instead of weaker Internet of Things (IoT) devices from compromised Residential Internet Service Providers.</p> <p>According to Cloudflare, the attacker also used a rather small yet very powerful botnet of 5,067 devices, each capable of generating roughly 5,200 rps when peaking.</p>

"To contrast the size of this botnet, we've been tracking another much larger but less powerful botnet of over 730,000 devices," [revealed](#) Cloudflare Product Manager Omer Yoachimik.

"The latter, larger botnet wasn't able to generate more than one million requests per second, i.e., roughly 1.3 requests per second on average per device. Putting it plainly, this botnet was, on average, 4,000 times stronger due to its use of virtual machines and servers.

This is one of several massive volumetric attacks detected by Cloudflare throughout the last several years, with the company recording a short-lived HTTP DDoS attack that [peaked at 17.2 million requests per second \(rps\)](#) in August 2021.

The company also mitigated a [15.3 million rps attack](#) in April 2022 that used approximately 6,000 bots to target a Cloudflare customer operating a crypto launchpad.

Also noteworthy is that the June and April attacks were volumetric attacks that used gigantic junk requests to exhaust the targeted server's resources (CPU and RAM) and were both carried out over HTTPS.

"HTTPS DDoS attacks are more expensive in terms of required computational resources because of the higher cost of establishing a secure TLS encrypted connection," Yoachimik explained.

"Therefore, it costs the attacker more to launch the attack, and for the victim to mitigate it. We've seen very large attacks in the past over (unencrypted) HTTP, but this attack stands out because of the resources it required at its scale."

The botnet used in this month's record-high 26 million rps DDoS attack generated over 212 million HTTPS requests within 30 seconds via requests from more than 1,500 networks in 121 countries worldwide.

Microsoft also disclosed that it mitigated in November another massive and [record-breaking 3.47 terabits per second \(Tbps\) DDoS attack](#) that flooded servers used by an Azure customer from Asia with malicious packets.

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HEADLINE	06/13 DOJ took malware fight into your computer
SOURCE	https://www.politico.com/news/2022/06/13/how-doj-took-the-malware-fight-into-your-computer-00038932?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO — The Justice Department is increasingly seeking and receiving permission to secretly reach into Americans' computers to delete malware — a shift officials say reflects a growing embrace of aggressive and creative tactics for combating a surge in cyberattacks.</p> <p>Botnets — armies of hacked computers used to power everything from email spam campaigns to denial-of-service attacks that take down websites — pose a major threat to internet security, as do mass malware infections.</p> <p>In the past year, federal prosecutors and FBI agents have increased their efforts to defeat botnets and contain malware outbreaks by directly removing malicious code from infected computers, without the knowledge or authorization of those computers' owners.</p> <p>"We have gotten more comfortable, as a government, taking that step," Adam Hickey, a deputy assistant attorney general for national security, said in an interview at the RSA cybersecurity conference in San Francisco.</p> <p>The latest example of this approach came in April, when U.S. authorities wiped malware off of hacked servers used to control a Russian intelligence agency's botnet, preventing the botnet's operators from sending instructions to the thousands of devices they had infected. A year earlier, the Justice</p>

Department [used an even more expansive version of the same technique](#) to send commands to hundreds of computers across the country that were running Microsoft's Exchange email software, removing malware [planted by Chinese government agents](#) and other hackers.

In both cases, federal prosecutors obtained court orders allowing them to access the infected devices and execute code that erased the malware. In their applications for these orders, prosecutors noted that government warnings to affected users had failed to fix the problems, thus necessitating more direct intervention.

Unlike in years past, when botnet takedowns prompted [extensive debates about the propriety of such direct intervention](#), [the backlash to these recent operations](#) was limited. One prominent digital privacy advocate, [Alan Butler of the Electronic Privacy Information Center](#), [said](#) malware removals required close judicial scrutiny but acknowledged that there was often good reason for them.

Still, DOJ officials said they see surreptitiously taking control of American computers as a last resort. "You can understand why we should be appropriately cautious before we touch any private computer system, much less the system of an innocent third party," Hickey said.

Bryan Vorndran, who leads the FBI's Cyber Division, said in an interview at RSA that the government's approach is to "move from least intrusive to most intrusive."

In the early days of action against botnets, beginning with a 2011 takedown of a network called Coreflood, senior government officials were reluctant to push the limits of their powers.

"With Coreflood, it was, 'Okay, you can stop the malware, but we're not going to delete it. That feels like that's just too much, too fast,'" Hickey said.

In the decade since Coreflood, the government has disrupted many other botnets, but not through malware removals. Instead, authorities employed techniques such as [seizing websites](#) used to route hackers' instructions and redirecting those instructions so they never arrive.

Typically, when the FBI wants to take down a botnet that hackers have assembled by infecting vulnerable routers or other products, the bureau begins by working with device manufacturers to issue warnings to customers. The number of remaining infected devices powering the botnet drops off very quickly after these warnings, Vorndran said, "but it doesn't get anywhere close to zero."

Next comes direct outreach to the remaining victims. In the case of the Russian government botnet, FBI agents notified hundreds of victims that they should patch their devices. To address [the Exchange crisis](#), the FBI and Microsoft contacted thousands of vulnerable organizations. But even after that step, Vorndran said, "we're left with something remaining, where there's still a usable vector for attack." The Russian government botnet — which included computers in states such as Texas, Massachusetts, Illinois, Ohio, Louisiana, Iowa and Georgia — still retained about 20 percent of its command-and-control servers after the FBI's victim notifications.

"The question becomes, what do we do?" Vorndran said. "Should the adversary still have the opportunity to utilize these to conduct an attack, whether inside the United States or [elsewhere]? And our answer to that will always be 'No,' especially when we have the legal authorities and the capability to neutralize that botnet."

This is when malware removal comes into play.

After identifying infected devices, the government asks a court for permission to send commands to those devices that will cause the malware to delete itself. Essentially, the FBI uses the malware as a point of entry to the infected computers — it doesn't need to hack the computers itself, because it's piggybacking on someone else's hack. These operations rely on intelligence that the bureau gathers about the botnet in question, including, sometimes, the passwords necessary to control the malware. A court's permission is

necessary, at least for devices in the U.S., because accessing them constitutes a search under the Fourth Amendment.

DOJ officials cited several reasons for the recent embrace of this tactic.

One is new leadership. Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco has been a key proponent of this strategy, having seen the value of disruption operations during her time as White House homeland security and counterterrorism adviser.

“The political leadership currently has seen this has been done before [and] is very forward-leaning,” Hickey said.

Senior officials are also more willing to sign off on aggressive actions because they understand the technology better. “They can ask questions of the FBI to assure themselves, ‘What have you done to test this? How’s it going to work?’” Hickey said, “and so they’re comfortable moving forward with an [operation] like that.”

The public generally seems to be on board, too. “We have done things like this a number of times where I don’t feel like people are like, ‘Are you crazy?’” Hickey said. “There’s still an appropriate level of scrutiny of these operations, but I think we have established credibility and trust.”

Whereas in the past it was hard for prosecutors to justify intrusive actions to their superiors, Hickey said, it is now harder for them to justify not taking those actions and leaving a botnet intact. “We’ve gotten to this point where we’re like, okay, if we’ve tested [our code], if we’ve worked with the manufacturer, if we’ve done everything we can to ensure there will not be collateral damage, why would we just leave the malware there?”

These changes have not just been driven by an increased comfort with reaching into people’s computers. Companies whose products are being abused are now more likely to share what they know with the government, according to Hickey. “They don’t have the authority to get a search warrant,” he said, “but they know that we will do that.”

In addition, the FBI, as part of [a broader shift toward disrupting hackers](#), has begun devoting more personnel and resources to the difficult work of developing the tools necessary for these operations.

“We still do believe in taking players off the field,” Vorndran said. “But at the end of the day, if there’s an adversary that has an attack vector available, we’re going to do everything we can to neutralize that.”

Malware removals are only likely to become more common as botnets continue to proliferate, the FBI’s expertise with this technique grows and DOJ leaders’ familiarity with the strategy increases.

There has been “an evolution of our thinking” about how to stop botnets, Hickey said, as prosecutors have developed greater “risk tolerance” for complicated operations and department leaders have recognized a growing “confidence by the public and Congress.”

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HEADLINE	06/13 CISA: new FEIT advisors to help agencies
SOURCE	https://federalnewsnetwork.com/cybersecurity/2022/06/cisa-details-new-feit-advisors-helping-agencies-improve-cyber-defenses/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency is augmenting its shared cybersecurity service model with a new team of advisors who are deploying to individual agencies to dive into how they can improve their specific network defenses.</p> <p>The advisors are organized under the Federal Enterprise Improvement Team or FEIT, pronounced, “fight,” according to Eric Goldstein, executive assistant director for cybersecurity at CISA.</p>

The team represents a new evolution for CISA, which has long provided shared cyber services like the EINSTEIN intrusion detection system and the Continuous Diagnostics and Maintenance (CDM) program.

“But we really did very little bespoke hand holding of agencies to really figure out what’s their security program like today? What’s their environment like? What’s their infrastructure like? And then how can we help them progress on a journey to get in the place that they need to be,” Goldstein said during a Monday event hosted by the Information and Technology Industry Council.

FEIT was funded through a portion of the \$650 million CISA received under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

“With these new FEIT teams, we now are hiring personnel who can actually work with individual agencies based upon their unique maturity and characteristics to identify gaps, develop improvement plans and really be with them on their entire journey to improvement,” Goldstein said.

The establishment of the agency advisors comes as lawmakers increasingly look to put CISA at the center of federal civilian executive branch cybersecurity operations. Both the [House](#) and [Senate](#) are moving to update to the Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014 with legislation that would, among other things, codify CISA’s central role in federal cyber defense efforts.

The FEIT teams will also help CISA better tailor the tools and services it provides to agencies through its Cybersecurity Shared Services Office, Goldstein said. In addition to mainstays like EINSTEIN and CDM, CISA also offers services like a centrally managed Vulnerability Disclosure Policy Platform, security operations services, and a Protective Domain Name System Resolve Service

“The combination of our federal enterprise improvement teams working with agencies to figure out the shared service roadmap where we can always resolve gaps at scale, that’s really our way of managing the significant asymmetry between agencies,” Goldstein said.

CISA seeking recruits

The improvement teams are just one area of growth for CISA.

The Biden administration’s fiscal year 2023 budget includes \$11.9 million for the FEIT teams to continue the funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act.

“Dedicated funding in FY 2023 will help transition from near-term remediation and tactical recovery into sustained, long-term strategic recovery,” CISA’s budget documents state. “FEIT provides dedicated support and resources to federal agencies and reduces federal cybersecurity risk by bridging operational and programmatic support activities, extending support before and after Incident Response (IR), and sustaining improvement initiatives against a set of strategic priorities determined through enhanced analytic capabilities.”

A [posting on the USA Jobs website](#) shows CISA is currently recruiting advisors for the FEIT program.

The listing shows CISA is hiring advisors through the relatively [new Cyber Talent Management System \(CTMS\)](#). The system is exempt from many of the government’s traditional hiring, classification and compensation practices, allowing CISA to recruit, hire, pay and promote cyber talent in different ways compared to their colleagues on the General Schedule.

For the currently listed cyber advisor openings, CISA is offering a 10% salary supplement for potential hires in the metro Washington, D.C. area.

Goldstein also highlighted [a June 29 online cybersecurity hiring](#) event during Monday’s ITI conference. He said June 29 represents “major hiring event” for the agency.

	“We share the same challenge as every organization in our field, which is the cybersecurity hiring market right now, it’s tight, and finding the leading cybersecurity experts across disciplines that reflect the diversity of our country really is our call to action,” he said.
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HEADLINE	06/14 Wave of Discord hacks amid crypto crash
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/3ad8x9/wave-of-discord-hacks-is-making-the-crypto-crash-more-painful-for-investors
GIST	<p>Virtually every cryptocurrency has been crashing for at least a month—and it keeps getting worse. This has led to major cryptocurrency companies Crypto.com, Gemini, and Coinbase to lay off between 5 percent, 10 percent, and 18 percent of their staff, respectively. But there is one group that’s still thriving in the crypto world: Discord hackers.</p> <p>In the first two weeks of June alone, hackers have compromised dozens of Discord servers, seven of which occurred just in the last three days. One blockchain analyst tallied 41 hacks occurring between June 1-10, and the popular “Web 3 is going just great” project—which chronicles hacks, scams, lawsuits and other bad news in the world of crypto—counted several more recent breaches. (Motherboard confirmed a sample of 24 of these hacks.)</p> <p>Among the hacked Discords were popular NFT projects like the Bored Ape Yacht Club, Mars Cats Voyage, Known Origin, and Homeless Friends.</p> <p>Even as cryptocurrencies crash and the money going around the whole ecosystem is slowing down, there’s still some to steal, which explains why hackers haven’t stopped during the so-called “crypto winter.” Targeting Discord servers and channels is also a great way for hackers to simultaneously target thousands of people who hold cryptocurrencies and NFTs.</p> <p>Usually, hackers take over the accounts of administrators and post an announcement with a malicious link, or use the admin’s account to push out similar announcements using the bots that the admins have control of. In both cases, from the perspective of the users, these are messages coming from people or bots that are part of the daily routine of the Discord server, which makes them trustworthy. And that’s why they are so successful.</p> <p>Hackers can also target multiple servers at the same time by compromising bots that are used by several crypto projects. In May, during another string of hacks targeting NFT projects’ Discord servers, hackers were able to hit multiple projects at the same time by taking control of the Discord bot MEE6, a tool that helps Discord server owners automate welcome messages, announcements, and other events.</p> <p>At the time, the MEE6 Twitter account said that the root cause of the hacks was that one of its employees was hacked.</p> <p>It’s unclear if the recent string of hacked Discord servers was also done by compromising a bot used by different projects or by targeting individual projects, or with a combination of both strategies.</p> <p>Discord did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>Ultimately, as Motherboard reported at the end of May, these hacks are happening because Discord was never built for users and servers that required a high level of security.</p> <p>“[Discord] is not built with the idea of enshrining secure communications, it is not built with the idea of thorough privacy in mind. It is not built with the idea of very focused almost [Advanced Persistent Threat] level attackers. Some of these scam groups must have dozens or hundreds of employees in them,” Mitchell Amador, the CEO of blockchain security firm Immunefi, previously told Motherboard. “They’re effectively corporations that are professional and dedicated to achieving these outcomes. And they are just</p>

	ripping through Discord. It was never built to protect against such a dedicated attacker who is targeting such a vast swathe of accounts.”
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HEADLINE	06/14 Bitcoin crash taking El Salvador with it
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7zwj7/the-bitcoin-crash-is-taking-el-salvadors-big-bet-with-it
GIST	<p>The ongoing crypto crash has managed to wipe out over 50 percent of the value of El Salvador’s Bitcoin hoard.</p> <p>The Nayib Bukele tracker, named after the country's Bitcoin-obsessed president, records each purchase the country announces, its cost basis, total reserves, and average cost basis of those reserves. Bukele has purchased 2,301 Bitcoins at an average cost of \$45,908 and a total cost of \$105.6 million. Today, with the price of Bitcoin hovering around \$22,000, El Salvador’s reserves have shed 51 percent of their value and are worth \$51.6 million.</p> <p>El Salvador's embrace of Bitcoin has been bombastic, and widely lambasted by critics inside the country and out. Shortly before its most recent purchase on May 9, rating agency Moody’s downgraded the country's debt. Before that, in January, the IMF recommended that El Salvador liquidate its Bitcoin holdings and abandon the cryptocurrency as legal tender, resulting in an angry rebuke from the government: Treasury Minister Alejandro Zelaya saying on local television that "no international organization is going to make us do anything, anything at all.”</p> <p>A planned Bitcoin bond was going to help finance the construction of the currently unbuilt "Bitcoin City," which Bukele unveiled a gold scale model of last month. Bukele imagines a geothermal city built in the shadow of a volcano that also serves as a tax haven, but details are scant about how any of this would actually be built.</p> <p>But El Salvador doesn't appear worried. On Monday, Zelaya said at a press conference that Bitcoin's price collapse posed an "extremely minimal" fiscal risk because it represents about half a percentage point of the national general budget.</p> <p>Bitcoin's largest publicly known holders, which includes El Salvador, have been posting massive on-paper losses amid the ongoing crash. Michael Saylor's MicroStrategy holds 129,218 Bitcoins bought at a cost of nearly \$4 billion, but are now worth \$2.9 billion (a loss of 26 percent). Saylor has a \$205 million loan with Silvergate that was used to buy some of that Bitcoin, which may require a margin call when Bitcoin falls below \$21,000 (which it briefly did on Tuesday morning) though the chief executive said MicroStrategy had funds to manage a price decrease to as low as \$3,652.</p> <p>In a February filing with the SEC, Tesla said it bought \$1.5 billion worth of the crypto token in 2021 and held nearly \$2 billion worth by the year’s end. Bitcoin has declined over 50 percent in that same period, and Tesla's gains were reportedly wiped out as early as May.</p> <p>It’s unlikely that the pain will come to an end anytime soon. Other crypto-related companies are bracing for a “crypto winter” with venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz warning that “dark days” were ahead and Coinbase rescinding job offers last week then announcing plans to lay off 18 percent of its staff today (and promptly cutting fired employees access to workplace systems).</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 China spying thru smart coffee machines?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/14/chinese-smart-coffee-machine-threat-data-security/
GIST	<p>The worst part of waking up could be the Chinese spying in your coffee cup.</p> <p>American researcher Christopher Balding said he uncovered evidence that China is devouring data collected through smart coffee machines made in the communist country.</p>

Mr. Balding's report at New Kite Data Labs said problems with the internet-connected coffee machines are part of a broader data collection effort aimed at Internet of Things devices with low security and unclear data policies.

IoT home appliances include robotic vacuums and thermostats that use machine learning to keep temperatures comfortable.

"China is really collecting data on really just anything and everything," Mr. Balding said. "As a manufacturing hub of the world, they can put this capability in all kinds of devices that go out all over the world."

Mr. Balding said the problematic coffee machines are made by Kalerm in Jiangsu, China. The machines gather product information, payment data, and customer information involving location and time, the report from New Kite Data Labs said.

The data provides insight into a user's name, relative location and usage patterns. In commercial settings such as hotel breakfast buffets, a coffee machine might collect types of payments and routing information.

Mr. Balding said his research firm wouldn't disclose how it obtained the information because he does not want China to stop him from learning more about its data collection.

New Kite Data Labs' report made clear that the data was collected from consumers in China. Yet it said the products are sold widely throughout the U.S. and Europe and the data exfiltrated from machines in China is likely taken from machines in the U.S.

"While we cannot say this company is collecting data on non-Chinese users, all evidence indicates their machines can and do collect data on users outside of Mainland China and store the data in China," the report said. "The data is collected at the point of operation from software embedded in the coffee maker."

New Kite Data Labs did not reveal evidence to show the Chinese government is using data gathered by Kalerm.

Still, China's policies of military-civil fusion mandate corporations to cooperate with the communist government. That means data stored in China is exposed to the government.

Kalerm did not respond to requests for comment.

Smart coffee machines are not the only vulnerable internet-connected devices putting hidden data at risk. Devices may connect to smartphones or have embedded cameras and microphones to sense and respond to voice commands, making more data available to a manufacturer.

Some robotic vacuums use microphones to respond to users' commands. The vacuums can be controlled with apps available through Apple and Google app stores.

Last year, the cybersecurity firm Mandiant said it uncovered a vulnerability in baby monitors and video doorbells that use the ThroughTek Kalay network, which might allow hackers to access live video and audio.

ThroughTek said at the time that it had notified customers about the flaw and told them how to address it.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency published an alert about the flaw in August. A cybersecurity official noted that the vulnerability resided in a software development kit designed to encrypt data that is transferred from one point to another and used heavily in IoT devices.

China is not the only nation interested in the data produced by IoT devices.

	<p>Former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden has expressed concern about a blender.</p> <p>Mr. Snowden, who revealed private details of NSA’s global surveillance in 2013 and fled to Russia, said the blender’s electronic signature could reveal his location to the U.S. government and others, according to Barton Gellman’s 2020 book “Dark Mirror.”</p> <p>Mr. Balding has noted that China operates from a distinct position of gathering all the data it can and determining how to use it later.</p> <p>“Most countries of any significant size probably have interest in devices like this — make zero mistake about that,” Mr. Balding said. “I think the thing that is unique about China is the breadth and depth of their data-collection efforts.”</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Children are targets for ID theft
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/06/14/what-is-child-identity-theft/
GIST	<p>Axton Betz-Hamilton remembers the moment she decided to become an identity theft expert. She was 11 years old and watching her parents deal with a string of increasingly invasive identity crimes they couldn’t seem to shake, no matter how closely they guarded their personal information.</p> <p>Her commitment only grew when she applied for her first apartment as an undergraduate and learned that the thief had stolen her credentials and ruined her credit, she said.</p> <p>Six months after earning her doctorate, Betz-Hamilton got a call from her father. Her mother had recently passed away, and inside an old filing folder he’d found an over-drafted credit card statement along with a copy of Betz-Hamilton’s birth certificate. Together, the father and daughter pieced together decades of identity crimes. The perpetrator had been inside the family all along — her mother.</p> <p>“I went through this little period of thinking, ‘Maybe Iowa State needs to take that Ph.D. back.’ I wrote a dissertation on child identity theft and I couldn’t even see that my mom was the one doing it,” she said. “Then I decided: Something needs to be done.”</p> <p>Betz-Hamilton, now an assistant professor of consumer affairs at South Dakota State University, went on to write a book on her experience and continues to study child identity theft as its impact grows. As early as 2011, research from Carnegie Mellon University suggested kids could be up to 51 times more likely to experience identity theft than adults. Now identity theft affects 1.25 million kids — or about 1 out of 50 children — every year, according to the research firm Javelin.</p> <p>Most of the time, child identity theft victims know the perpetrators personally, Javelin’s data shows. But social media and the data economy play a growing role. Kids have a hard time distinguishing between good and bad intentions when they meet people on the internet, says Kelly Merryman, president and chief operating officer of digital safety company Aura. Sometimes they disclose information that’s useful to identity thieves. It doesn’t help that schools, camps and other caregivers still ask for kids’ sensitive data like Social Security numbers and home addresses — information that, once digitized, can fall into the wrong hands.</p> <p>Worst, kids usually don’t find out they’ve been victims of identity theft until they take a big life step like applying for federal student aid or buying their first car, says Eva Velasquez, CEO of California-based Identity Threat Resource Center, which helps people minimize risk and respond to identity theft. The impact of ID theft on young adults can be devastating: credit scores trashed, financial aid withheld and even employment denied. Fixing child identity theft takes longer than fraud against adults, according to Javelin, and costs the average U.S. family \$372 out-of-pocket on top of any fraudulent charges.</p> <p>Child identity theft happens so often that Velasquez said she considers it an “epidemic.” But many guardians don’t take steps to prevent it. Here’s what you can do to guard your child’s financial future online and off.</p>

What does child identity theft look like?

If someone opens a credit card or buys a home using your child's Social Security number, odds are good you won't get an alert. Your child's credit history is presumably a blank slate, and fraudulent lines of credit won't set off alarm bells.

"No one's going to call you and say, 'Hey, I thought you already have a house. Why are you buying another one?'" There's just no checks against it," Aura's Merryman said.

Government agencies are looking for ways to cross-check identity without compromising people's privacy. One new tool will let credit-granters run a check on a birthdate-SSN combination to make sure there's a match. That way, bad actors couldn't pair your kid's SSN with a false birth date that makes it look like they're older than 18.

Sometimes parents find out someone has stolen their baby's identity when they list the baby as a dependent on a tax return and are told the baby already reported income, ITRC's Velasquez said. More commonly, teenagers apply for federal student aid using their SSNs only to be denied for having terrible credit the family knew nothing about.

At best, the fraud happened recently and the family resolves it quickly. At worst, the crime started years before and the teen's identity is already tied to a web of fraudulent accounts. Some students have to delay college while they untangle the mess, Velasquez said. Betz-Hamilton described years of high security deposits and interest rates: Her first credit card had a \$300 limit, \$69 annual fee and 29.99 percent APR, she noted.

"With identity theft, you're guilty until proven innocent," she said.

Signs of child identity theft include credit card offers in your child's name, as well as notice of new accounts and attempts to open accounts in their name, according to ITRC — so keep an eye on your mailbox.

What can you do to prevent child identity theft?

Freeze your child's credit

Freezing your child's credit is free and doesn't affect their score. To do so, you'll need to send freeze requests to each of the major credit agencies — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion — as well as copies of official documents to prove your identity, your child's identity and your relationship to the child.

All three agencies require you to send the requests by mail. You can find directions for [Equifax here](#), [Experian here](#) and [TransUnion here](#).

Keep your child's information safe

About 3 out of 4 victims of child identity theft know the perpetrator personally, Javelin found. Caregivers are frequently implicated in child identity theft cases, and Betz-Hamilton said her conversations with victims suggest that identity theft often co-occurs with other forms of abuse.

That means protecting your child's foundational identity documents — including their birth certificate, Social Security card and insurance cards — from people in your circle is incredibly important, Velasquez said. Keep your child's documents in a lockbox, especially if your home has lots of people going in and out.

Avoid sharing sensitive information when it isn't necessary. After-school care and activity organizers likely don't need your child's Social Security Number, so push back when sign-up forms ask for too much information — or leave fields blank and work with organizers to provide the information they actually need.

You may decide to invest in an identity protection service that monitors the internet and “Dark Web” for personal information. But keep in mind — these services can’t prevent identity theft, and [Consumer Reports found](#) some companies may rely on this misunderstanding to make a sell.

Get involved in your child’s online activity

The earlier kids get online, the earlier their information is exposed to the data economy. Javelin found that the younger parents think it’s appropriate to give kids unrestricted internet access, the more likely their kids are to experience identity theft or data breaches.

Kids also may overshare with bad actors posing as online friends, Merryman said. As you talk to your kid about boundaries with people they meet online, let them know never to share identifying information like home addresses and Social Security Numbers.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Cryptocurrency firms quake as prices fall
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/technology/crypto-industry-prices-fall.html
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO — No one wanted to miss out on the cryptocurrency mania.</p> <p>Over the last two years, as the prices of Bitcoin and other virtual currencies surged, crypto start-ups proliferated.</p> <p>Companies that market digital coins to investors flooded the airwaves with TV commercials, newfangled lending operations offered sky-high interest rates on crypto deposits and exchanges like Coinbase that allow investors to trade digital assets went on hiring sprees.</p> <p>A global industry worth hundreds of billions of dollars rose up practically overnight. Now it is crashing down.</p> <p>After weeks of plummeting cryptocurrency prices, Coinbase said on Tuesday that it was cutting 18 percent of its employees, after layoffs at other crypto companies like Gemini, BlockFi and Crypto.com. High-profile start-ups like Terraform Labs have imploded, wiping away years of investments. On Sunday, an experimental crypto bank, Celsius, abruptly halted withdrawals.</p> <p>The pullback in the crypto ecosystem illustrates the precariousness of the structure built around these risky and unregulated digital assets. The total value of the cryptocurrency market has dropped by about 65 percent since autumn, and analysts predict the sell-off will continue. Stock prices of crypto companies have cratered, retail traders are fleeing and industry executives are predicting a prolonged slump that could put more companies in jeopardy.</p> <p>“The tide has gone out in crypto, and we’re seeing that many of these businesses and platforms rested on shaky and unsustainable foundations,” said Lee Reiners, a former Federal Reserve official who teaches at Duke University Law School. “The music has stopped.”</p> <p>Cryptocurrencies are digital coins exchanged using networks of computers that verify transactions, rather than a centralized entity like a bank. For years, they have been marketed as a hedge against inflation caused by central banks flooding the economy with money. Bitcoin, the most valuable cryptocurrency, has a built-in limit to its supply.</p> <p>But now with stocks crashing, interest rates soaring and inflation high, cryptocurrency prices are also collapsing, showing they have become tied to the overall market. And as people pull back from crypto investments, the outflow is exposing the unstable foundations of many of the industry’s most popular companies.</p> <p>More than 62 crypto start-ups are now worth \$1 billion or more, according to CB Insights, a firm that tracks private financing. Last year, the industry received more than \$25 billion in venture funding across roughly 1,700 deals, according to research from The Block. OpenSea, the largest marketplace for the unique digital images known as nonfungible tokens, reached a staggering \$13 billion valuation. And Wall</p>

Street banks such as JPMorgan Chase, which previously shunned crypto assets, and Fortune 500 companies like PayPal rolled out crypto offerings.

Many of these companies are equipped to survive a downturn in cryptocurrency prices. But cutbacks are likely to continue as they adjust their strategies after years of excessive growth. Among the most vulnerable may be start-ups that launched their own cryptocurrencies, as prices plummet across the board.

Some industry experts have long said the exuberant growth of the last two years wasn't going to last forever, comparing it to the late-1990s dot-com boom. At the time, dozens of dot-com companies were going public amid hysteria over the early promise of the internet, even though few of them made money. When [confidence evaporated in the early 2000s](#), many of the dot-coms went bust, leaving just the biggest — such as eBay, Amazon and Yahoo — standing.

This time, investors predict there will be more survivors. “You certainly have some overhyped companies that don't have the fundamentals,” said Mike Jones, an investor at the venture firm Science Inc. “But you also have some really strong companies that are trading way below where they should.”

There have been warning signs that some crypto companies were not sustainable. Skeptics have pointed out that many of the most popular firms offered products underpinned by risky financial engineering.

Terraform Labs, for example, offered TerraUSD, a so-called stablecoin with a fixed value linked to the U.S. dollar. The coin was hyped by its founder, Do Kwon, who raised more than \$200 million from major [investment firms](#) such as Lightspeed Venture Partners and Galaxy Digital, even as critics warned that the project was unstable.

The coin's price was algorithmically linked to a sister cryptocurrency, Luna. When the price of Luna plummeted in May, TerraUSD fell in tandem — a “death spiral” that destabilized the broader market and plunged some investors into financial ruin.

This week, Celsius's announcement that it was freezing withdrawals had a similar impact. Celsius had aggressively marketed its banklike lending service to customers, promising yields as high as 18 percent if they deposited their crypto holdings with the company.

For months, critics wondered how Celsius could sustain such high yields without putting its depositors' funds in jeopardy through risky investments. The company [drew scrutiny](#) from several state regulators. In the end, a drop in crypto prices appeared to put the company under more pressure than it could withstand.

With the price of Bitcoin tumbling, Celsius announced on Sunday that it was freezing withdrawals “due to extreme market conditions.” The company did not respond to a request for comment.

The market instability has also triggered a crisis at Coinbase, the largest U.S. crypto exchange. Between the end of 2021 and late March, Coinbase lost 2.2 million active customers, or 19 percent of its total, as crypto prices dropped. The company's net revenue in the first three months of the year shrank 27 percent from a year earlier, to \$1.2 billion. Its stock price has plunged 84 percent since it [went public last year](#).

This month, Coinbase said it would [rescind job offers and extend a hiring freeze](#) to battle the economic downturn. On Tuesday, it said it would cut about 1,100 workers.

Brian Armstrong, Coinbase's chief executive, informed employees of the layoffs in [a note](#) on Tuesday morning, saying the company “grew too quickly” as crypto products became popular.

“It is now clear to me that we over-hired,” he wrote. A Coinbase spokesman declined to comment.

“It had been growth at all costs over the last several years,” said Ryan Coyne, who covers crypto companies and financial technology at the Mizuho Group. “It's now turned to profitable growth.”

Gemini, the crypto exchange led by the billionaires Tyler and Cameron Winklevoss, also announced this month that it was laying off 10 percent of its work force. In a memo to staff, the Winklevoss twins said the industry had entered a “crypto winter.”

But they also expressed optimism about the future of the industry. “The crypto revolution is well underway and its impact will continue to be profound,” they wrote in a memo. “But its trajectory has been anything but gradual or predictable.”

Last year, the Singapore-based exchange Crypto.com aired a now-notorious TV [commercial](#) starring the actor Matt Damon, who declared that “fortune favors the brave” as he encouraged investors to put their money in the crypto market. Last week, Crypto.com’s chief executive [announced](#) that he was laying off 5 percent of the staff, or 260 people. On Monday, BlockFi, a crypto lending operation, [said](#) it was reducing its staff by roughly 20 percent.

Gemini and BlockFi declined to comment. A Crypto.com spokesman said the company remains focused on “investing resources into product and engineering capabilities to develop world-class products.”

Cryptocurrencies have long been volatile and prone to boom-and-bust cycles. In 2013, a Chinese ban on Bitcoin sent its price tumbling. In 2017, a proliferation of companies creating and selling their own tokens led to a run-up in crypto prices, which crashed after regulators cracked down on so-called [initial coin offerings](#).

These bubbles are built into the ecosystem, crypto enthusiasts said. They attract talented people to the industry, who go on to build valuable projects. Many of the most vocal cheerleaders encourage investors to “buy the dip,” or invest more when prices are low.

“We have been in these downward spirals before and recovered,” Mr. Jones, the Science Inc. investor, said. “We all believe in the fundamentals.”

Some of the companies have also remained defiant. During Game 5 of the N.B.A. finals on Monday night, Coinbase aired a commercial that alluded to past boom-and-bust cycles.

“Crypto is dead,” it declared. “Long live crypto.”

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HEADLINE	06/14 Cryptocurrency problems spreading?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/06/14/coinbase-layoffs-bitcoin-price-crash/
GIST	<p>The crypto-exchange giant Coinbase said Tuesday it was laying off nearly one-fifth of its workforce, a sobering sign that the challenges of the once blazingly hot industry go beyond those of troubled bank Celsius to the very heart of the crypto-investment world.</p> <p>In an email to employees, Coinbase chief executive Brian Armstrong said the company would cut 18% of its workforce. The cuts will affect roughly 1,100 of its approximately 6,100 employees, he said. All were terminated immediately but will be given at least 14 weeks of severance.</p> <p>The news follows developments late Sunday night in which the crypto bank Celsius said it was temporarily halting transactions, raising fears about the lender’s liquidity.</p> <p>But with questions long mounting about that company’s solvency and business practices, Celsius can be written off by crypto boosters as an outlier. That is harder to do for Coinbase, a top barometer for the industry’s health. With a self-proclaimed 98 million users, the company is one of the main ways people buy and sell crypto assets, and warnings about its business augur darker messages about the fate of crypto as an investment class.</p>

“A recession could lead to another crypto winter, and could last for an extended period,” Armstrong said in his email, referring to the period in 2018 when many cryptocurrencies plummeted in value before eventually regaining their losses and then some.

But the stakes are higher now than they were four years ago, as far more Americans have come aboard the crypto bandwagon. A study by Grayscale Investments found that 55% of all bitcoin holders bought the currency in 2021.

The Coinbase announcement comes as recession fears mount, tech stocks plunge and, most troublingly for the crypto world, the two leading coins plummet. As of Tuesday afternoon, bitcoin and ethereum had lost, respectively, 27% and 33% of their value over the previous five days. It follows the collapse last month of the financial products of Terra, which dragged down values for much of the market.

“How much worse can things really get anon? This is oof city,” wrote Larry Cermak, director of research for the crypto data company the Block Crypto, on Twitter on Tuesday. A moment later he posted, “Just remember, things can always get worse.”

At least one crypto veteran The Post spoke to, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to not appear to be criticizing a single company, suggested Tuesday’s news was Coinbase-specific. The person noted the company’s stock price had dropped 80% in the past six months.

But it’s unlikely that such significant challenges would plague a platform of that size without also affecting rivals like Binance and FTX. Both those companies are privately held and do not need to disclose financial performance.

The Federal Reserve is moving swiftly to hike interest rates with the goal of suppressing price inflation, but higher rates typically make investors more averse to riskier bets such as crypto and tech stocks.

Coinbase’s swoon has been dramatic.

In 2020, the year Coinbase went public, Armstrong made \$60.5 million in total compensation, according to public securities filings, including a \$1 million salary, \$56.6 million in stock options and \$1.8 million in “personal security” expenses.

Just four months ago, Coinbase had one of the hottest commercials on the Super Bowl, a minimalist spot involving a throwback DVR symbol and a QR code. The ad tripled installation of its app the day it ran and suggested a moment of cultural arrival. The company at that time said it would add 2,000 employees.

On Tuesday, Armstrong was humming a different tune. “It is now clear to me that we over-hired,” he wrote, as currency values continued to fall.

Still, despite popular perception of a crypto crater, a broad crash is more elusive. In the volatile world of crypto, a dip is often prelude to a resurgence, as investors thinking a bottom has been reached flood in, hoping for a score.

“Blood in the streets, that’s the time you pick up assets like bitcoin,” Cory Klippsten, the chief executive of SwanBitcoin, which offers products to facilitate bitcoin purchases for users, said in an interview Tuesday. He acknowledged Bitcoin’s plunge in recent months – about 65% since November – but said it had also dropped more than 80% in 2018 before hitting an all-time high last year.

Klippsten affiliates with a group known in crypto circles as the “Bitcoin Maxis.” Members of this informal clan (Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey is one of its more famous adherents) believe that the early coin – with its more organic development and wider adoption – is vastly superior to all the other currencies, which they mostly deride. Klippsten has long called for accountability on Celsius and, as the

	<p>company has unraveled in the past few days, has offered various promotions on Swan to those who suffered losses to attract those investors.</p> <p>“This is a historically great time to get into bitcoin,” Klippsten said in the interview. “You’re somewhere near the bottom.”</p> <p>Investors are aware of past major crypto rebounds – the price of bitcoin nearly sextupled from the fall of 2020 to the fall of 2021 – and like a heist-movie character hoping to hit the big one, emerge once again.</p> <p>They are fueled by social media, with its gold-rush talk as well as negative-reinforcement language. During periods of volatility, many crypto boosters go on the attack on Twitter with common evangelist refrains such as “Enjoy being poor” and “FUD” – crypto-shorthand that knocks skeptics for sowing “fear, uncertainty and doubt” for their own selfish reasons.</p> <p>The goal at least partly is to create a frenzy that will prompt investors to buy or hold on to crypto at a moment they might stay away, ensuring the price stays high. If enough people act on such talk of a rebound, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.</p> <p>Such assumptions have not been off-base: In the early hours of Tuesday, the price of bitcoin actually rose 9% before falling again.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	06/15 Blast leads P.A. to ‘ Hamas bomb plot’
SOURCE	https://www.ins.org/mysterious-blast-leads-pa-to-hamas-bomb-plot-against-its-hq/
GIST	<p>(June 15, 2022 / JNS) Palestinian Authority security forces have uncovered what they believe is a Hamas bomb lab in Beitunia, near Ramallah, following a mysterious blast in the town, Israeli media reported on Monday.</p> <p>After being drawn to the site by the explosion, Palestinian forces found a 17-pound explosive device there, <i>Channel 12</i> reported.</p> <p>The P.A. has claimed that the lab was part of a plot to attack the <i>Mukataa</i>, as the P.A. headquarters in Ramallah is known, as well as the P.A.’s television station and senior PA officials, according to the report.</p> <p>The P.A. arrested five Hamas operatives following the incident, including a relative of Hamas’s political bureau deputy chairman Saleh al-Arouri, who is based in Lebanon and heads efforts by Hamas to orchestrate terrorist cells in Judea and Samaria, said <i>Channel 12</i>.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Forces announced on Wednesday that it and the Israel Police had completed a series of counter-terrorism operations throughout Judea and Samaria, the military said in a statement.</p> <p>Israeli raids occurred in Nablus, Ramallah, Kharas and the Aida Camp near Bethlehem, as well as in Yatta near Hebron, where a suspect was arrested for facilitating the illegal movement of Palestinians across the Judea and Samaria security barrier.</p> <p>Security forces arrested a total of six security suspects, and confiscated a number of weapons.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Mich. man hurt in explosion on ‘watchlist’
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SOURCE	https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/local/2022/06/14/warren-man-hurt-in-home-bomb-explosion-was-on-federal-watch-list-police-say/
GIST	<p>WARREN, Mich. – A man who was injured when a bomb exploded in his Warren home Saturday was reportedly on a federal watch list.</p> <p>On Saturday, June 11, a 38-year-old man was handling a bomb when it exploded in his home on Gentner Street, near 8 Mile Road and Gratiot Avenue, police said. The man lost a hand in the explosion and was severely injured with burns covering more than half of his body.</p> <p>The explosion also set the house and garage ablaze.</p> <p>Following the explosion Saturday, investigators say they discovered several more bombs and firearms and thousands of rounds of ammunition inside the Warren home. The homeowner, whose identity has not yet been released, was on a federal watch list and potentially had ties to domestic terrorism, police said.</p> <p>Authorities previously shared that the man had an extensive criminal history.</p> <p>The 38-year-old was alive after the explosion and was taken to the hospital. He remains hospitalized as of Tuesday morning.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Sweden 'changing' anti-terror laws
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/sweden-terrorism-laws-turkeys-nato-finland
GIST	<p>Sweden is prepared to "change" its anti-terrorism legislation to accommodate complaints from Turkey, the lone nation blocking Sweden's entry into NATO.</p> <p>Turkey objected to the addition of both Sweden and Finland to NATO last month, arguing the two countries' support for Kurdish rebels in the Middle East constitutes support for terrorist organizations.</p> <p>NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg confirmed Tuesday that Sweden "already started to change its counter-terrorism legislation," and "will ensure that the legal framework for arms exports will reflect their future status as a NATO member with new commitments to allies."</p> <p>"These are two important steps to address the concerns that Turkey has raised," Stoltenberg added. "The aim is to solve those issues as soon as possible, to be able to welcome Finland and Sweden as full members as soon as possible."</p> <p>Sweden and Finland formally applied to join NATO in May, a direct response to Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Both countries have traditionally remained neutral in European conflicts.</p> <p>While Russia had previously warned against expanding NATO, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov dismissed the development in a statement last month.</p> <p>"Finland and Sweden, as well as other neutral countries, have been participating in NATO military exercises for many years," Lavrov said at the time.</p> <p>"NATO takes their territory into account when planning military advances to the East. So in this sense there is probably not much difference. Let's see how their territory is used in practice in the North Atlantic alliance," he added.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/15 US loosens Afghan evacuees' exemptions
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/15/politics/afghan-evacuees-terrorism-restrictions-exemptions/index.html

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-06-14/afghan-refugees-now-have-a-chance-to-avoid-terrorism-designation-that-blocked-their-path-to-the-u-s>

GIST

WashingtonCNN — [The Biden administration](#) is loosening certain terrorism-related exemptions for [Afghan evacuees](#) who worked with or on behalf of the US government so they can qualify for immigration benefits, the Department of Homeland Security announced Tuesday.

“These actions will also ensure that individuals who have lived under Taliban rule, such as former civil servants, those required to pay service fees to the Taliban to do things like pass through a checkpoint or obtain a passport, and those who fought against the Taliban are not mistakenly barred because of overly broad applications of terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds (TRIG) in our immigration law,” the department said in a statement.

Immigrant advocates and attorneys have been urging the Biden administration to consider such circumstances for Afghans who helped the US and are seeking humanitarian relief since the Taliban takeover of [Afghanistan](#).

The exemptions will be on a case-by-case basis after going through screening and vetting, DHS said. Previous administrations have also invoked this authority, including in 2019 for applicants linked with Lebanese Forces or Kataeb Militias during the Lebanese Civil War.

“Doctors, teachers, engineers, and other Afghans, including those who bravely and loyally supported U.S. forces on the ground in Afghanistan at great risk to their safety, should not be denied humanitarian protection and other immigration benefits due to their inescapable proximity to war or their work as civil servants,” Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said in a statement.

[More than 79,000 Afghans](#) have been admitted to the US through Operation Allies Welcome, an effort launched by the Biden administration during the evacuation of Afghanistan.

Doctors, teachers, engineers and other Afghans who were forced to associate with the Taliban will now have a chance at asylum or visas after the Biden administration loosened a terrorism-related designation on Tuesday, according to government officials and documents reviewed by the Los Angeles Times.

The exemption will be applied on a case by case basis after security vetting and is expected to help Afghans who fled their country after U.S. troops withdrew and the Taliban took over last August, as well as some Afghans who entered the U.S. earlier, said officials from the Department of Homeland Security.

Some can be flagged with the terrorism designation for as little as paying their electricity bill to the Taliban, paying money to get through a Taliban checkpoint or obtaining a passport issued by the Taliban. Others can get the designation for having worked as civil servants under Taliban rule in the 1990s. Among them are Afghan citizens who assisted the U.S. government. They must otherwise be eligible for asylum, refugee or other immigration status.

As part of Operation Allies Welcome, the U.S. has allowed more than 79,000 Afghans to enter the country since last year’s Taliban takeover.

Afghans, “including those who bravely and loyally supported U.S. forces on the ground in Afghanistan at great risk to their safety, should not be denied humanitarian protection and other immigration benefits due to their inescapable proximity to war or their work as civil servants,” said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas in a statement.

In Los Angeles, a 49-year-old man who came to the U.S. decades ago was denied a green card last year because he had been forced as a student in the late 1980s to help a group associated with the Afghan mujahedin, according to his attorney, Stacy Tolchin.

He distributed fliers and fixed weapons, believing he would be harmed if he did not do so, Tolchin said.

Tolchin hopes her client can now get a green card, along with a chance to bring family members to the U.S.

“I’m going to cry,” she said. “This is morally and politically right.”

U.S. immigration law bars people who are members of a “terrorist organization” or engaged in “terrorism-related” activity from receiving refugee or asylum status.

Immigration advocates and some government officials have long said that the statute was overly broad and could apply to situations not typically thought of as terrorism. Congress has allowed exemptions since 2005, and immigration officials have issued them for other groups.

The exemptions, according to U.S. officials and documents, can apply to those who fought against the Taliban or against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from the late 1970s into the early 1990s, those who were employed as civil servants during Taliban rule from 1996 to late 2001 or after August 2021, and those who provided “insignificant or certain limited material support to a designated terrorist organization.”

“Due to the Taliban’s presence and control of entities, roads, and utilities, many individuals who lived in Afghanistan needed to interact with the Taliban in ways that, absent such an exemption, render them inadmissible to the United States under U.S. law,” read a Department of Homeland Security statement.

The policy will not apply to those who targeted U.S. interests or noncombatants, violated human rights, were in high-level positions under the Taliban or supported the Taliban. U.S. officials believe the new exemptions could help those seeking special immigrant visas, which are provided to those who helped the U.S. government in Afghanistan.

“We remain committed to our Afghan allies and processing special immigrant visa applications as expeditiously as possible, while always protecting our national security,” said Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in a statement.

More than half of the Afghan immigrants in the U.S. live in the Sacramento, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Washington and New York metro areas, according to the Migration Policy Institute.

Sacramento is home to about 10,000 Afghans with special immigrant visas, according to resettlement workers, while roughly 60,000 Afghan Americans live in the Bay Area.

The group Human Rights First has long said the provisions hurt refugees with no connection to terrorism, including those from countries other than Afghanistan.

Anwen Hughes, a director of legal strategy for the refugee program at Human Rights First, said that the implementation of the exemptions would be key.

“It is not like this is a blanket waiver, but it does mean that in those cases where everyone agrees people were victims of the unjust consequences of these statutes, now there’s going to be a tool to provide them with relief,” she said.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	06/14 Farm animals: 20M die before slaughter
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/15/more-than-20-million-farm-animals-die-on-way-to-abattoir-in-us-every-year

Tens of millions of farm animals in the US are dying before they can be slaughtered, according to a Guardian investigation exposing the deadly conditions under which animals are transported around the country.

Approximately 20 million chickens, 330,000 pigs and 166,000 cattle are dead on arrival, or soon after, at abattoirs in the US every year, analysis of publicly available data shows. A further 800,000 pigs are calculated to be unable to walk on arrival.

Official records of how the animals died are not published, but veterinarian and welfare specialists told the Guardian the main causes were likely to be heat stress, especially during the summer months, and freezing temperatures and trauma.

The numbers of deaths were likely to have been increased by the long distances some animals are forced to travel and the rising frequency of transporting them.

A truck carrying pigs was [tracked while it travelled](#) for 32 hours nonstop across the US in August last year, with the animals kept inside for the whole journey.

Even longer journeys have been reported for animals being transported across the border to or from Mexico and Canada. One trucker told an animal welfare investigator he had driven cattle from the Canadian city of Quebec to Mexico, a journey of almost two days.

Another trucker said he had brought cattle from a small stockyard on the east side of New York to Chihuahua in Mexico, which took 48 hours. The cattle had no water, food or rest during the journey. Only one piece of legislation governs US animal transport: the 28-hour law, which was [first enacted](#) in 1873. The [law states](#) that animals must be unloaded, rested for five hours and given food and water if the journey is longer than 28 hours. It does not cover birds.

Piper Hoffman, a legal director for the NGO Animal Outlook, said the law was originally designed to cover animals transported by rail. "It was only in 2006, in response to pressure from NGOs, that the US government acknowledged the law also protects animals transported by truck," she said.

Despite animal transport investigations by Animal Outlook in 2005, 2012 and 2021 – all of which documented what the NGO alleged were violations of the law – no prosecutions have taken place to date. In Europe, transporting animals by road is theoretically limited to eight or nine hours, but exceptions and implementation failures mean some journeys are far longer.

The Guardian's transport-related mortality figures for chickens were calculated by converting US Department of Agriculture (USDA) data showing the weight of poultry [meat condemned](#) before slaughter.

The number of pigs is based on USDA's 2021 [slaughter figures](#) and an [analysis](#) that found, during the years 2012 to 2015, an average of 0.26% of pigs died after transport, while 0.63% were unable to walk. The cattle figure is similarly based on USDA slaughter figures and an [analysis](#) that found an average of 0.49% of cattle were condemned after transport between 2003 and 2007.

A USDA statistician who reviewed the Guardian's analysis had no corrections to make to the final figures. Gwendolen Reyes-Illg, a veterinarian who works with Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), a US non-profit, said research [indicates](#) the main causes of death in cattle were "heatstroke, trauma and respiratory disease ... [and in] pigs, the main reason is hyperthermia (overheating), especially during summer".

Additional risks included injuries from slipping in urine and manure, exhaustion, hunger and thirst, said Hoffman.

Dena Jones, a director at AWI, said consolidation in the meat sector with larger and fewer businesses was increasing the distances animals were having to travel to slaughter. An increasing separation between the

	<p>different stages of production meant animals were also moved, for example, from growing areas to fattening areas and then to slaughter.</p> <p>Jones said violations of the 28-hour law were likely to be common, “perhaps affecting 10% or more of farm animals transported between states”.</p> <p>Responding to accusations that it has failed to properly enforce animal welfare regulations, a USDA spokesperson said in an email: “The [US] attorney general is authorised to seek civil penalties against any transporter that knowingly and wilfully violates the 28-hour law. Therefore, any further inquiries about applicability of the 28-hour rule should be directed to the Department of Justice.” The US Department of Justice did not respond to questions.</p> <p>The USDA did not respond to requests for comment on the number of transport-related animal deaths, nor did the agricultural representative groups the National Pork Producers Council and the American Farm Bureau Federation.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Raft by raft, Congo rainforest loses its trees
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/06/14/climate/congo-rainforest-logging.html
GIST	<p>The vast rainforest of the Congo Basin, one of the most important in the world, has long been protected by its remoteness: In many places, roads are rare.</p> <p>But there is a river.</p> <p>The mighty Congo River has become a highway for sprawling flotillas of logs — African teak, wenge and bomanga in colors of licorice, candy bars and carrot sticks. For months at a time, crews in the Democratic Republic of Congo live aboard these perilous rafts, piloting the timber in pursuit of a sliver of profit from the dismantling of a crucial forest.</p> <p>The biggest rafts are industrial-scale, serving mostly international companies that see riches in the rainforest. But puny versions also make their way downriver, tended by men and their families who work and sleep atop the floating logs.</p> <p>Forests like these pull huge amounts of carbon dioxide out of the air, making them essential to slow global warming. The expanded scale of illegal logging imperils their role in protecting humanity’s future.</p> <p>The Congo Basin rainforest, second in size only to the Amazon, is becoming increasingly vital as a defense against climate change as the Amazon is felled. However, the Democratic Republic of Congo for several years in a row has been losing more old-growth rainforest, research shows, than any country except for Brazil.</p> <p>In this lawless trade, the river is the artery to the world. In some places, where once-towering trees are prepared for the journey, the water itself is stained caramel from the bleeding sap of felled trees.</p> <p>Every day along the forested Congo River banks, rafts held together with little more than roping and optimism set out on the arduous voyage.</p> <p>Our journey began not far from the community of Loaka.</p> <p>Loaka is nestled along a tributary flowing into the Congo River. Dozens of wooden houses are perched on stilts. Canoes dug from tree trunks line the shore. Branches used for cooking fires smolder in piles nearby. And on the water recently, a flotilla was taking shape.</p>

Men were peeling switches of vines to tie together a raft of dozens of logs cut from the forest in their backyard. Their destination: the sprawling riverside lumber ports of the capital city, Kinshasa, hundreds of miles downriver.

It's a project involving almost everyone in Loaka, a growing community that simply cannot make enough money from fishing to expand its cramped school, let alone buy backpacks and other supplies.

None of the men were eager for the journey, though. The last time they tried it, the trip was a catastrophe. "We had so many problems," said Bosenga Kongamondo, the town's top official.

Back then, they had set out with 120 logs, but disaster struck almost immediately.

The raft hit a sandbar, ripping loose dozens of logs, which floated away. Then, the men got stranded on another sandbar for days. While they were stuck, a violent rainstorm swept away even more logs.

Weeks later, when they finally reached Kinshasa, the men had only 37 left to sell. Yet the village today feels it has no choice but to try once more, even without proper cutting permits.

Alphonse Molosa wandered into the thicket recently and clambered atop a conquest: a giant African coralwood tree lying on the forest floor, its bright orange insides bared.

Felling such a tree doesn't give Mr. Molosa any sense of accomplishment, he said. In fact, he counts himself a lover of trees. He looks forward to the blooming of afromosia trees, also known as African teak, a rare species with reds so vibrant he can spot them from his boat in the middle of the river.

"Ah, it's beautiful," Mr. Molosa said. "I heard on the radio that trees help to give us oxygen that we breathe and for us to survive. But here there is no other way to survive without cutting trees."

In a few weeks, after they have collected enough logs, he and his neighbors planned to push them into the river and once again hop aboard.

MONEY AND CORRUPTION

A few miles downriver, we stopped at a logging beach where a floating market catered to workers on a huge industrial raft that dwarfed the ones assembled by Mr. Molosa and his neighbors.

Here, some 250 giant logs with ragged, floppy bark were being strung with steel cables and readied for the river at a small beach used by an international logging company.

Industrial logging in Congo is laden with corruption, according to a recent [government audit](#). Lucrative licenses have been handed out as political favors. In fact, the past six ministers of environment, the very people in charge of protecting the forest, are accused of illegally selling off huge swaths of it, according to the audit, which reviewed Congo's industrial logging as of 2020.

Nearly all the logging, Congolese officials say, today is in some fashion illegal.

"Fraud upon fraud," said Ève Bazaiba Masudi, Congo's environment minister, who was appointed in April 2021. A few months into the job, Ms. Bazaiba opened [an investigation after saying](#) her own signature had been forged on logging licenses.

Tracking trees in Congo can be a circuitous route, filled with shady characters and big money. The giant trees lining the beach downriver from Loaka belonged to a Chinese company, Castor, which workers and managers at the beach said was tied to "Tango Fort," the nickname of a Congolese general, [Gabriel Amisi Kumba](#).

Over the years, General Amisi has been accused of involvement in illegal mining and arms trading and was sanctioned for [human rights abuses](#) by the American and European authorities. His logging concessions, [which he sold to Chinese investors in 2018](#), were issued illegally, the government audit said. In a text message, General Amisi denied any connection to the company.

Neighboring countries such as Gabon have put tight controls on logging in recent years. Ms. Bazaiba, who is also deputy prime minister, is under great pressure to do the same and has begun an effort to rein in corruption that includes suspending logging licenses that were given out illegally. She and Congo's president in 2021 [secured pledges](#) of \$500 million from international donors [to fight deforestation](#).

During a March visit to her office in Kinshasa, timber industry lobbyists hovered outside her door. Leading them was [Albert Yuma Mulimbi](#), the head of the nation's business lobby. Last year he [was ousted](#) as chairman of the state mining enterprise, Gécamines, amid corruption allegations. Mr. Yuma did not return a request for comment.

"I have so many pressures," Ms. Bazaiba said.

But the logging trade plays out in places far removed from [global conferences](#) and stuffy government offices in the capital city.

"AND IF WE DIE"

Out on the river, where the silvery water is indiscernible from the sky, the perilous and haphazard nature of the trade becomes clear.

A tugboat was bobbing in the shallow water off Castor's beach, preparing to power a flotilla of logs downriver.

The giant rafts are too unwieldy for the tug's engine to handle, the crew said, making the work dangerous. They earn about \$6 a day. If logs are lost, pay is docked, and "if we die, it's not the responsibility of the company," said Mbranda Makombo, the tugboat's mechanic, a veteran of five trips guiding logs to Kinshasa.

Just a few weeks before, Mr. Makombo said he did, in fact, nearly die. He and his wife and child were sleeping below deck when a larger boat rammed them. His family was saved only by men from the other boat who cut through the twisted metal.

As Mr. Makombo spoke, Jean-Louis Boonga Ifaso, an agricultural engineer for Castor, the logging company, sidled up in a dugout canoe, listening in.

Castor does the right things, he said. It operates a factory in Kinshasa where logs are transformed into planks used in construction, and it exports wood worldwide. (A country manager for Castor did not return requests for comment.)

But Mr. Boonga, who also works as an activist, said he knew well the problems of the trade. He sat in his shallow canoe, gently rocking on the river, and vented: About the power of money. About government inaction. About how Congo is a victim of pollution created by the industrialized nations that now want Congo's trees — the same trees that can help absorb carbon dioxide from the dirty world they made. About the rules that govern the forest that no one obeys.

International companies follow most laws, he said, but not all of them. "When it comes to human resources and their Congolese staff, they don't have any respect," he said.

SHAKEDOWN

On the water, disrespect takes many forms. Brutal rainstorms. Hidden sandbars. And demands for bribes.

“Push! Push!”

Across the water we heard a captain calling out to a dozen men in waist-deep water, toes wrinkled from a full day spent trying to break free their 46-log vessel, which was stuck on a sandbar.

On the other side of the raft, Clémentine Ekoba, the cook and cleaner for the crew, tended a small fire. “Every trip this happens,” she sighed.

“The biggest problem is getting stuck in the sand. The second biggest problem is the navy.” Officers along the river, underpaid themselves, are notorious for demanding bribes.

Already on this trip, Ms. Ekoba said, in just two weeks’ time the crew had paid bribes of flour, beans and aspirin. “They come and they take everything — even this,” she said, pointing to an oar.

Ms. Ekoba maintained a secret hiding place underneath the nylon bag stretched between sticks that serves as her tent where she had squirreled away \$50 worth of Congolese francs. So far, officers hadn’t found it.

“But we still have a long journey,” she said.

“WE IMPORT TOOTHPICKS”

Not all logs travel by raft. Some international companies operate immense steel barges heaped high with wood destined for overseas.

A jumble of huge logs rested atop one of the barges at a riverside beach operated by Sodefor, a subsidiary of a Liechtenstein-based company.

Nearby, a man squatted beside a freshly cut bilinga tree. He pulled out a measuring tape and stretched it across the sawed trunk, as gold as ripened wheat. It was more than six feet across.

Industrial barges like Sodefor’s aren’t immune to the loss of cargo from storms that blow across the river, though the big companies have sophisticated ways to recapture the logs that get away. Sodefor has even deployed sonar and divers to retrieve logs that spilled into the river during a storm.

In an interview, Sodefor’s general manager, José Trindade, said the company’s operations were “completely legal.”

“The government has to differentiate between the companies that respect the rules and those that don’t,” he said.

Sodefor also transforms its timber into plywood before export, Mr. Trindade said, a practice that Ms. Bazaiba, the environment minister, would like all international companies to adopt. Recently, she banned exports of uncut timber in the hope that the companies would hire more Congolese to shape the wood, rather than filling those jobs abroad.

“Can you imagine, we’ve been exporting our timber, but we import toothpicks from China?” she said. “It makes no sense.”

WAYLAID BY THE WIND

We pulled onto the shore of Bolobo, a bustling hamlet at a bend in the river that was littered with hundreds of planks scattered across the sand, remnants of a disaster still playing out.

Three months earlier, a crew of 20 men had set off with a raft of 6,000 perfect planks, precut in hopes of getting a higher price downriver in Kinshasa. They had pulled into Bolobo to restock on food when a

storm blew in. In no time, 1,000 planks had slipped into the river and were swept away, along with a shelter they had built atop their raft.

For two weeks, workers had been slowly reassembling the craft. Men stood in chest-high water, heaving against a large branch they hoped would pry free a part of the raft, now half-buried in sand.

“The wind is not your brother,” said André Ezabela, one of the raft’s rowers.

Etienne Yaekela, the owner of the planks, had arrived from Kinshasa just days before to survey the damage. “Thank God no one died,” he told the men once he saw the extent of the damage.

Over what was left of the raft, the wind whipped a red and blue Congolese flag. Our motorboat broke down here, too, and so we waited two days for our own repairs, watching boys on the beach using a broken plank as a teeter-totter.

As we pulled out of Bolobo, we saw water lapping across another broken raft, this one abandoned. A few pieces of wood remained barely tethered, threatening to break loose into a river ready to claim them. A monument to defeat for those who would pass.

FEVER, FAR FROM HELP

About 60 miles downstream from Bolobo, the river narrows significantly and deepens. Sandbars disappear. But there are other risks.

Crocodiles roam the banks. Navy patrols increase. Malaria is ever-present.

Nehemie Mokonjo and his raft of 137 logs had made it this far, losing only two.

But the mosquito netting that lashed them together was starting to fray. If the wind picked up, Mr. Mokonjo’s cargo would be in danger. “There is nothing else that scares us more,” he said.

Yet he had a more urgent problem: His little sister was sick.

Jeanne Nzambe, 6, was aboard with her mother, the raft’s cook. Wearing a poofy pink satin dress with white polka dots and sparkly belt, she lay drooped across the logs under a shelter of mosquito netting. She had been feverish for three days.

The closest hospital was in Kinshasa, 15 hours away by raft. But our vessel, a motorboat, could get there in three.

As much as the river leaves people in need, it also creates kinship. People help one another.

Mr. Mokonjo hopped aboard, cradling his sister, and the boat raced downriver to find a clinic.

SCHOOL DESKS, SUPERYACHTS

A crook in the river, and Kinshasa’s sprawling port of Kinkole comes into view. It’s the last stop for men and women who have spent weeks or months on the river. But not for the trees they have shepherded here.

Rafts line up by the dozens, tangled in the lily pads of a filthy marsh, waiting in the shallows in what is essentially a watery parking lot.

Along the shore, a cacophony of rumbling forklifts hauls tree trunks across knee-deep ruts in dried mud. Screaming chainsaws tear through wood, spitting splinters into the air. Barefoot laborers muscle logs up the riverbank where men shape them into plywood and planks. Women collect scraps of bark to sell for use in cooking fires.

	<p>All have found a way to profit from Congo's trees. For them, the forest is the only option for survival.</p> <p>Disappointment awaits some of the rafts' captains who arrive to find their logs are too skinny and immature for purchase. All that way for nothing.</p> <p>Logs that are sold here will end up in Kinshasa's classrooms, where students clamor for new desks. Others will be taken abroad for use as "exotic wood" flourishes in billionaires' yachts that line glittering ports. Many will end up in living rooms all over the world, formed into stylish tables and cabinets that began as towering trees in Congo before being crafted in the furniture factories of China or Vietnam.</p> <p>And the appetite for these trees shows no signs of slowing.</p> <p>Next door to Kinshasa's logging port, giant new logging barges are being forged as fast as possible, workers say two or three a month, to send back up the river to gather, all the more efficiently, even more precious logs.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Fires, heat wave: climate anxiety in youth
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Report-Fires-heat-waves-cause-climate-anxiety-17242404.php
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Oregon health officials say the impacts of climate change, including more devastating wildfires, heat waves, drought and poor air quality, are fueling "climate anxiety" among young people.</p> <p>Their findings have been published in a report that highlights youth feelings of distress, anger and frustration about perceived adult and government inaction.</p> <p>In a briefing on Tuesday hosted by the Oregon Health Authority, three young people spoke about how climate change has affected their mental health.</p> <p>High school student Mira Saturen expressed the terror she felt when the Almeda Fire swept through the area near her hometown of Ashland in southwestern Oregon in September of 2020. The blaze destroyed more than 2,500 homes.</p> <p>"It was a terrible and stressful couple of days as details about the fire trickled in," said the 16-year-old. Her fears were heightened by the fact that her father works for the fire department. "He was out fighting the fire for over 36 hours, which was super scary for me."</p> <p>Gov. Kate Brown in March 2020 directed OHA to study the effects of climate change on youth mental health. In its report, the agency says its research was "designed to center the voices of youth, especially tribal youth and youth of color in Oregon."</p> <p>The report underlines that marginalized communities are more likely to experience adverse health effects from climate change, and notes that "emerging research is showing similar disproportionate burdens in terms of mental health."</p> <p>Te Maia Wiki, another high school student in Ashland, touched on this.</p> <p>"For me, it's important to mention that I'm Indigenous," she said. The 16-year-old's mother is Yurok, an Indigenous people from Northern California along the Pacific coast and the Klamath River.</p> <p>"In my mother's generation, when she was growing up, she would go to traditional ceremonies and have smoked salmon that was fished traditionally by our people on our river which we have fished at since time immemorial," Wiki said. "In my lifetime, eating that fish, seeing that smoked salmon in our ceremonies, is</p>

scarce. This is a full spiritual, emotional and physical embodiment of how I am stressed out by this and how this impacts me.”

OHA partnered with the University of Oregon Suicide Prevention Lab to review literature, conduct focus groups with young people, and interview professionals from the public health, mental health and educational sectors. The interviews were conducted shortly after the extreme heat wave that slammed parts of Oregon in the summer of 2021.

While focusing on Oregon, the report underlines broader concerns about youth mental health in the United States amidst growing rates of depression and suicide nationwide.

Climate change and the coronavirus pandemic have further exacerbated an already alarming youth mental health crisis. The number of high school students reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness increased by 40% from 2009 to 2019, according to a Surgeon General’s Advisory issued in December. Citing national surveys, the same advisory noted that suicide rates among young people ages 10-24 increased by 57% between 2007 and 2018.

Despite the crisis, study participants also expressed a sense of resilience.

“One of the biggest, bittersweet takeaways from our focus group is that we’re not alone in this,” said 23-year-old Mecca Donovan during Tuesday’s briefing. She said for young people with “all of these crowded thoughts,” having more opportunities to talk could help with mental health.

Lead author Julie Early Sifuentes, with OHA’s Climate and Health Program, said she hopes the study “generates conversations in families, in schools, in communities and that it informs decisions in policy making.”

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HEADLINE	06/13 Extreme heat kills, sickens, strains people
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/13/climate/extreme-heat-wave-health.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=Climate%20and%20Environment
GIST	<p>When W. Larry Kenney, a professor of physiology at Pennsylvania State University, began studying how extreme heat harms humans, his research focused on workers inside the disaster-stricken Three Mile Island nuclear plant, where temperatures were as high as 165 degrees Fahrenheit.</p> <p>In the decades that followed, Dr. Kenney has looked at how heat stress affects a range of people in intense environments: football players, soldiers in protective suits, distance runners in the Sahara.</p> <p>Of late, however, his research has focused on a more mundane subject: ordinary people. Doing everyday things. As climate change broils the planet.</p> <p>Heat advisories and excessive heat warnings were in effect on Monday across much of the eastern interior of the United States, following a weekend of record-smashing heat in the country’s Southwest. The heat will move farther Northeast in the next few days, according to the National Weather Service, into the upper Mississippi Valley, western Great Lakes and Ohio Valley.</p> <p>With severe heat waves now affecting swaths of the globe with frightening regularity, scientists are drilling down into the ways life in a hotter world will sicken and kill us. The aim is to get a better grip on how many more people will be afflicted by heat-related ailments, and how frequent and severe their suffering will be. And to understand how to better protect the most vulnerable.</p> <p>One thing is for sure, scientists say: The heat waves of the past two decades are not good predictors of the risks that will confront us in the decades to come. Already, the link between greenhouse-gas emissions and sweltering temperatures is so clear that some researchers say there may soon no longer be any point trying</p>

to determine whether today's most extreme heat waves could have happened two centuries ago, before humans started warming the planet. None of them could have.

And if global warming is not slowed, the hottest heat wave many people have ever experienced will simply be their new summertime norm, said Matthew Huber, a climate scientist at Purdue University. "It's not going to be something you can escape."

What's tougher for scientists to pin down, Dr. Huber said, is how these climatic shifts will affect human health and well-being on a large scale, particularly in the developing world, where huge numbers of people are already suffering but good data is scarce. Heat stress is the product of so many factors — humidity, sun, wind, hydration, clothing, physical fitness — and causes such a range of harms that projecting future effects with any precision is tricky.

There also haven't been enough studies, Dr. Huber said, on living full time in a warmer world, instead of just experiencing the occasional roasting summer. "We don't know what the long-term consequences of getting up every day, working for three hours in nearly deadly heat, sweating like crazy and then going back home are," he said.

The growing urgency of these issues is drawing in researchers, like Dr. Kenney, who didn't always think of themselves as climate scientists. For a recent study, he and his colleagues placed young, healthy men and women in specially designed chambers, where they pedaled an exercise bike at low intensity. Then the researchers dialed up the heat and humidity.

They found that their subjects started overheating dangerously at much lower "wet-bulb" temperatures — a measure that accounts for both heat and mugginess — than what they had expected based on previous theoretical estimates by climate scientists.

Effectively, under steam-bath conditions, our bodies absorb heat from the environment faster than we can sweat to cool ourselves down. And "unfortunately for humans, we don't pump out a lot more sweat to keep up," Dr. Kenney said.

Heat is climate change at its most devastatingly intimate, ravaging not just landscapes and ecosystems and infrastructure, but the depths of individual human bodies.

Heat's victims often [die alone](#), in their own homes. Apart from heatstroke, it can cause cardiovascular collapse and kidney failure. It damages our organs and cells, even our [DNA](#). Its harms are multiplied in the very old and very young, and in people with high blood pressure, asthma, [multiple sclerosis](#) and other conditions.

When the mercury is high, we aren't as effective at work. Our thinking and motor functions are impaired. Excessive heat is also associated with greater [crime](#), anxiety, depression and [suicide](#).

The toll on the body can be strikingly personal. George Havenith, director of the Environmental Ergonomics Research Center at Loughborough University in England, recalled an experiment years ago with a large group of subjects. They wore the same clothes and performed the same work for an hour, in 95 degree heat and 80 percent humidity. But by the end, their body temperatures ranged from 100 degrees to 102.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

"A lot of the work we're doing is trying to understand why one person ends up on one side of the spectrum and the other one on the other," he said.

For years, Vidhya Venugopal, a professor of environmental health at Sri Ramachandra University in Chennai, India, has been studying what heat does to workers in India's steel plants, car factories and brick kilns. Many of them suffer from kidney stones caused by severe dehydration.

One encounter a decade ago has stayed with her. She met a steelworker who had been working 8-to-12-hour days near a furnace for 20 years. When she asked him how old he was, he said 38 to 40.

She was sure she'd misunderstood. His hair was half white. His face was shrunken. He didn't look younger than 55.

So she asked how old his child was and how old he was when he got married. The math checked out.

"For us, it was a turning point," Dr. Venugopal said. "That's when we started thinking, heat ages people."

Adelaide M. Lusambili, a researcher at the Aga Khan University in Kenya, is investigating heat's effects on pregnant women and newborns in Kilifi County, on Kenya's coast. In communities there, women fetch water for their families, which can mean walking long hours in the sun, even while pregnant. Studies have linked heat exposure to preterm births and underweight babies.

The most heartbreaking stories, Dr. Lusambili said, are of women who suffered after giving birth. Some walked great distances with their 1-day-olds on their backs, causing the babies to develop blisters on their bodies and mouths, and making breastfeeding difficult.

It has all been enough, she said, to make her wonder whether climate change is reversing the progress Africa has made on reducing newborn and childhood mortality.

Given how many people have no access to air-conditioners, which are themselves making the planet hotter by consuming [huge amounts of electricity](#), societies need to find more sustainable defenses, said Ollie Jay, a professor of heat and health at the University of Sydney.

Dr. Jay has studied the body's responses to sitting near an [electric fan](#), wearing wetted clothing and [sponging down](#) with water. For one project, he recreated a [Bangladeshi garment factory](#) in his lab to test low-cost ways of keeping workers safe, including green roofs, electric fans and scheduled water breaks.

Humans have some ability to acclimatize to hot environments. Our heart rate goes down; more blood is pumped with each stroke. More sweat glands are activated. But scientists primarily understand how our bodies adapt to heat in controlled laboratory settings, not in the real world, where many people can duck in and out of air-conditioned homes and cars, Dr. Jay said.

And even in the lab, inducing such changes requires exposing people to uncomfortable strain for hours a day over weeks, said Dr. Jay, who has done exactly that to his subjects.

"It's not particularly pleasant," he said. Hardly a practical solution for life in a stifling future — or, for people in some places, an increasingly oppressive present. More profound changes in the body's adaptability will only occur on the time scale of human evolution.

Dr. Venugopal gets frustrated when asked, about her research on Indian workers, "India is a hot country, so what's the big deal?"

Nobody asks what the big deal is about having a fever, but heatstroke puts the body in a similar state. "That is human physiology," Dr. Venugopal said. "You can't change that."

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HEADLINE	06/14 Russia coal mine: 95 tons methane an hour
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/14/climate/methane-emissions-russia-coal-mine.html
GIST	A remote-sensing satellite has detected one of the largest releases of methane from a single industrial site, an underground coal mine in south-central Russia. The finding is another indication of the scope of the problem of curbing emissions of methane, a potent planet-warming gas.

Thirteen plumes of the gas were observed at the Rapsadskya mine, the largest coal mine in Russia, in late January during a single pass of a satellite operated by GHGSat, a commercial emissions-monitoring firm. The total flow rate from all the plumes was estimated at about 87 metric tons (about 95 U.S. tons) an hour.

“This is the biggest source we’ve ever seen,” said Brody Wight, director of energy, landfills and mines at GHGSat, which was formed in 2011 and now has six emissions-sensing satellites. By contrast, the highest rate measured at Aliso Canyon, a natural gas storage facility in Southern California that had a major leak for nearly four months in 2015 and 2016, was about 60 metric tons an hour.

“This is a really big fish,” said Felix Vogel, a research scientist with Environment and Climate Change Canada in Toronto who is not affiliated with GHGSat.

Mr. Wight said it was not known how long the releases continued at this rate at the mine. But several previous satellite passes had detected emissions in the tens of tons an hour. “We’ve seen a pretty steady increase in what’s coming from this site overall,” he said.

Were the flow continuous at 87 metric tons of methane an hour, total yearly emissions would be equivalent to those from five average coal-fired power plants, the company said.

Mr. Wight said that the releases were most likely deliberate, as the Rapsadskya mine, like other coal mines, has naturally occurring methane-rich pockets amid the seams of coal. A buildup of methane at the mine in 2010 led to an explosion that killed 66 people.

To reduce methane concentrations, large fans draw air into and through the mine, ventilating the methane into the atmosphere.

Methane has more of an effect on warming than carbon dioxide, the major greenhouse gas emitted by human activities. Over two decades, methane can result in about 80 times the warming of the same amount of carbon dioxide.

Methane emissions are far lower than carbon dioxide emissions, and the molecules break down much more rapidly. But because of methane’s warming potential, reducing intentional or accidental emissions of the gas is seen as a way to more quickly limit global warming this century.

At the global climate talks in Glasgow last fall, [more than 100 countries pledged to cut methane emissions by 30 percent by 2030](#), although Russia and some other large emitters were not among them.

Until recently, precisely measuring emissions from specific industrial sites like mines, oil and gas production facilities and landfills could only be done using equipment on the ground or in airplanes. That limited the number of sites that could be studied.

While ground and airborne sensing is still conducted, satellites now can easily monitor much bigger areas. Most of these satellites have relatively coarse resolution, however, meaning that while they can detect gas over an area [in volumes similar to or greater than](#) that measured at the Russian mine, they cannot narrow the emissions down to specific sites. The GHGSat satellites are among a new generation with much finer resolution.

Dr. Vogel said that with these newer satellites, “We have tools now to allow us to get actionable information.”

“They allow you to really get down to the facility scale, to see specific parts of the facility where emissions are happening,” he said. “You can tell companies where to go to fix something.”

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SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/06/14/sequoia-trees-threatened-climate-wildfires/
GIST	<p>They are the largest trees in the world, living monuments with massive trunks and towering canopies that can thrive for 3,000 years. But ancient sequoia trees, which have been decimated by severe wildfires around California’s Sierra Nevada, are struggling to keep up with ever-worsening conditions. And this summer, they could face their greatest challenge yet.</p> <p>The trees, which grow in a narrow band of the Sierra Nevada, are accustomed to frequent wildfires — their tree rings show fire recurring every six to 30 years. But the worsening intensity of recent blazes has been too much for them to handle. Since 2020, three fires have resulted in the loss of 13% to 19% of the entire population, said Christy Brigham, chief of resources management and science at Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks.</p> <p>In August 2020, the Castle Fire killed up to 10,600 trees. And as many as 3,637 sequoias were killed or will ultimately die as a result of the September 2021 Windy and KNP Complex fires in the southern Sierra Nevada, according to the National Park Service.</p> <p>While fires at lower intensity have beneficial effects for the giant trees by clearing out the flammable vegetation and helping to release seeds from their sturdy cones, Brigham said the main concern is the “large patches of high-severity fire.”</p> <p>“The scale at which we are seeing high-severity fire right now — sequoias haven’t evolved with that,” said Linnea Hardlund, a giant sequoia forest fellow with Save the Redwoods League. “It continues to be surprising to a lot of people that giant sequoias are dying at this rate.”</p> <p>Sequoias have thick bark that can withstand lower-intensity fire, and their high canopies are usually above the flames, Hardlund said. But recent fires are reaching and consuming the canopy.</p> <p>The southern Sierra, hard hit during the 2012-2016 drought, has become an epicenter for tree mortality. Drought-weakened trees, particularly pine and cedar, were killed by insects during those years, and the effects of the past two years of extreme drought are also becoming apparent.</p> <p>Given record-setting dryness in 2022, another significant die-off is possible this year.</p> <p>“We are starting to see rapid mortality and elevated mortality again, especially in pines,” Brigham said.</p> <p>Research has linked severe burning to swaths of overly dense forest — a legacy of decades of firefighting — and high tree mortality, both of which have helped to drive “mass fires” and firestorms.</p> <p>Hardlund, who is also a graduate student at University of California at Berkeley, said changes in fuel, weather and climate conditions are leading to changes in observed fire behavior.</p> <p>“When you don’t have any fire history in the last century, you have 100 years of fuel buildup,” she said. As a result, forests have an abundance of smaller trees, where fires can start before spreading to mature trees.</p> <p>Hotter and longer fire seasons due to climate change are exacerbating already volatile forest conditions. As climate warms, forests are becoming more flammable and increasingly dense due to a lack of what experts call “good fire,” which can reduce fire fuels while maintaining forest health, such as the intentional burning used by Indigenous tribes for thousands of years.</p> <p>Add a tremendous amount of dead and downed material from the 21st-century megadrought and you have the ingredients for extreme fires that can burn for weeks and form pyrocumulus clouds, billowing vertical smoke clouds that indicate a fire is burning unusually hot as it consumes a forest. These intense blazes are capable of damaging or killing trees that have historically thrived with frequent fire.</p> <p>Now in a third year of drought, Sierra forests and giant sequoias face similar threats this summer.</p>

Paltry snowpack melted out early this year, reaching zero percent in the southern Sierra on May 24 — just two days later than last year. The first five months of 2022 were the driest on record for California, according to data from NOAA. Parts of the central and southern Sierra are now in exceptional drought, the most severe category. The 2021-22 water year has been the third-driest on record in the southern Sierra, behind 2020-21 and 1976-77.

The dice are loaded for a well-above-normal wildfire season in the West, including in California, said Ronnie Abolafia-Rosenzweig, a postdoctoral researcher at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo.

In a recent study, Abolafia-Rosenzweig and his co-authors found that winter and spring climate is strongly related to summer wildfire activity and to increases in burned area over the past four decades in the western United States. Previous research has linked those increases to human-caused climate change.

“We found that spring snowpack modulates how dry and hot summers are, where early snow disappearance favors hotter and drier summers,” he said.

Summer heat, in turn, is supercharging wildfires. This year, the Sierra are “likely to have dry conditions in late summer that enable large and fast-growing wildfires,” Abolafia-Rosenzweig said.

That could signal a risky season for the gigantic trees.

The Save the Redwoods League has called for emergency measures to protect sequoia groves from further destruction, in addition to long-term policy changes. The group is pushing to treat 2,000 acres of the most-at-risk groves before the 2023 fire season to remove unnatural vegetation buildup, including with carefully planned prescribed burning.

“Both the land cover and the climate are factors — and we have control over both,” Abolafia-Rosenzweig said. “We’re able to consider how both relate to growing fire risks and manage both accordingly.”

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	06/14 Murder-suicides by pilots vexing airlines
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/murder-suicides-by-pilots-are-vexing-airlines-as-deaths-mount/ar-AAYoW66
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- For decades, commercial airline travel has gotten progressively safer. But one cause of deaths has stubbornly persisted: pilots who intentionally crash in murder-suicides.</p> <p>Preliminary evidence suggests the crash of a China Eastern Airlines Corp. jet in March may be the latest such tragedy, a person familiar with the investigation said. If confirmed, that would make it the fourth since 2013, bringing deaths in those crashes to 554.</p> <p>So as aircraft become more reliable and pilots grow less susceptible to errors, fatalities caused by murder-suicides are becoming an increasingly large share of the total. While intentional acts traditionally aren't included in air-crash statistics, they would be the second-largest category of deaths worldwide if they were, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. By comparison, 1,745 people died as a result of pilot error, mechanical failures or other causes on Western-built jets from 2012 through 2021.</p> <p>“It’s scary,” said Malcolm Brenner, a former human-behavior investigator with the US National Transportation Safety Board who worked on the probe of the 1999 EgyptAir Flight 990 crash, which was found to be an intentional act. “It is a major cause of concern. It’s one the industry needs to address.”</p>

So far, however, these rare but deadly acts have defied simple solutions. While improving mental-health care is a priority, those who have chosen to kill themselves and scores of others at the same time on jetliners mostly didn't reveal any clues beforehand to coworkers, friends or family.

And because of the taboo nature of suicide, the cases create unique political and cultural challenges, at times leaving such events shrouded in mystery or open to dispute. The probe into Malaysia Airlines Flight 370's disappearance over the Indian Ocean in 2014 found it was likely flown there on purpose, for example, but the Malaysian government's report contains no information on who may have done so or why.

The risk of dying on an airliner has declined significantly in recent decades as a result of innovations in safety equipment, aircraft reliability and pilot training. After 5,005 people died on Western-built jets from 2001 through 2010, the total fell to 1,858 the next decade, according to data compiled by Boeing Co., AviationSafetyNetwork and accident reports. The odds of being on a plane involved in a fatal accident was about one in 10 million, according to Boeing.

But deaths attributed to pilot suicides bucked that trend, actually moving upward, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. If the China Eastern crash is confirmed as the latest such suicide, it will mean that deaths due to intentional acts have exceeded all other causes since the start of 2021.

So far, Chinese authorities have revealed few specifics about what led the China Eastern jet carrying 132 people to crash March 21. The flight, a Boeing 737-800 from Kunming to Guangzhou, was cruising at about 29,000 feet when it suddenly dove at high speed, according to Flightradar24 data. Surveillance videos show it hurtling nose-down toward the ground.

Government authorities and Boeing haven't announced any potential safety issues with the plane since then, suggesting no systemic faults have been uncovered. Preliminary information from the jet's crash-proof data recorder indicates that someone in the cockpit initiated the dive, said a person familiar with the probe who wasn't authorized to speak about it. The likelihood the crash was intentional was earlier reported by the trade publication Leeham News and Analysis as well as the Wall Street Journal.

China's embassy in Washington didn't respond directly to questions about whether the crash was intentional. Investigators are conducting the probe "in a science-based, meticulous and orderly manner" and will release information "in a timely and accurate fashion," the embassy said in an email.

As with any crash investigation, it can take months or years to conduct the tests and analysis needed to pinpoint a cause and rule out even the most remotely possible system failures.

In addition to the Malaysian plane lost with 239 people aboard, a Lam-Mozambique Airlines jet with 33 people went down in Namibia in 2013 after the captain locked the copilot out of the cockpit. In 2015, a Germanwings GmbH copilot also locked out the captain before slamming into the side of a mountain in France with 150 aboard.

Four other intentional crashes occurred on airlines around the world prior to 2013, killing another 389 people, according to [AviationSafetyNetwork](#) and accident reports. The incidents don't include terrorist acts, such as the planes that crashed on Sept. 11, 2001.

After the Germanwings crash, which French investigators [found](#) was caused by a copilot suffering from mental-health problems, US and European aviation regulators [expanded programs](#) to give air crews access to more psychological treatment and encourage them to come forward without fear of losing their jobs.

Surveys of airline pilots have shown that about [4%](#) to 8% have contemplated suicide, which is roughly the same rate as the population at large. Far fewer people actually attempt to carry it out -- and the handful of successful pilot murder-suicides on airliners is infinitesimally small by comparison.

Airline pilots must pass periodic medical exams to maintain their licenses and have been reluctant to report depression or other mental illness for fear of losing their livelihood, said Quay Snyder, a doctor specializing in aviation medicine who is co-leader of the US Aerospace Medical Association's mental health working group. The association has joined with regulators, airlines and unions to create peer-to-peer counseling and other programs to allow pilots to receive treatment while retaining their licenses.

Safety Measures

But a [panel](#) advising the US Federal Aviation Administration in 2015 found there was "no convincing evidence" that screening for suicidal tendencies would prevent incidents such as Germanwings.

"It is quite difficult to predict who is going to commit a murder-suicide," Snyder said.

Other possible ways to prevent pilot suicides run counter to long-standing safety or security measures. The sophisticated locks on cockpit doors that allow pilots to keep out other crewmembers were put in place to prevent hijackings. French authorities recommended against changing the door designs in the wake of the Germanwings crash, saying changes could undermine security.

One idea -- adding automated limits on a pilot's actions in the cockpit -- would require a dramatic shift in the philosophy of aviation safety.

"I'm a firm believer in the pilot who's on the flight deck being the ultimate person or device in charge of the aircraft," said Benjamin Berman, a former airline pilot who also worked as an accident investigator. "I don't see technology supplanting that role. But that leaves the pilot in control, allowing him or her to do whatever they want."

Multiple Pilots

Even the simple solution to always have at least two people in the cockpit, which was recommended by European regulators after Germanwings, is no guarantee that someone bent on bringing down a plane couldn't do it. While details of what happened aboard the China Eastern jet remain unclear, it had three pilots in the cockpit -- a captain, copilot and trainee -- according to Chinese media reports.

For now, aviation groups are calling for expanding pilot access to mental-health treatments while acknowledging that routine psychological care might not make a difference in the extreme murder-suicide cases.

"It's so rare," said David Schroeder, a former FAA psychologist who along with Snyder leads the Aerospace Medical Association's mental health efforts. "That's the difficulty. How do you try to predict that? How do you intervene when almost all flights are not like that?"

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HEADLINE	06/15 Brazil: 2nd suspect Amazon disappearance
SOURCE	https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/brazil-police-arrest-amazon-disappearance-dom-phillips-bruno-pereira-rcna33641
GIST	<p>Brazilian police have made a second arrest in the disappearance of a British reporter and an Indigenous expert in the Amazon jungle, while signaling a shift to a homicide probe 10 days after the pair went missing.</p> <p>The police only identified the second suspect by his initials, "O.C.O.," in a statement on Tuesday, but Reuters and the Associated Press have named him as Oseney da Costa de Oliveira. He is a fisherman and brother of Amarildo da Costa de Oliveira, the first man arrested in the case and the only suspect so far, the news agencies said.</p> <p>Police officials also indicated their focus had moved from a search-and-rescue operation to a murder investigation. Alex Perez, a police investigator, told reporters that Oseney da Costa de Oliveira did not resist arrest "on suspicion of homicide," Reuters reported.</p>

In the statement, federal police also said they seized firearm cartridges and an oar. They did not elaborate on why those items were seized and whether they belonged to the brothers.

British journalist Dom Phillips, 57, and Brazilian Indigenous people's expert Bruno Pereira, 41, were last seen on June 5 near the entrance of the Javari Valley Indigenous Territory, which borders Peru and [Colombia](#).

The news of the second arrest caps off a tumultuous few days for the men's families, as hope dwindles that they may be found alive and anger grows at the Brazilian government's response.

Their disappearance prompted a global outcry, with activists and environmentalists urging Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to do more to help find the two men. Bolsonaro said last week that the pair "were on an adventure that is not recommended" and speculated they could have been executed, according to Reuters. On Tuesday, protesters in the capital Brasilia walked to demand justice and answers for Phillips and Pereira.

Phillips' family told British media on Monday that they were told the bodies of the two men [had been found](#), but Brazil's federal police quickly rejected those reports, leaving the families facing more uncertainty.

The Brazilian embassy in London confirmed to NBC News in an email Tuesday that it has been in contact with Dom Phillips' family, at their request, but would not comment on what was said. NBC News has also asked the British Foreign Office for a statement but has not received a response.

NBC News has also reached out to Phillips' family and friends.

The Guardian, where Phillips has been a longtime contributor, [reported late Tuesday](#) that the Brazilian ambassador to the U.K. apologised to Phillips' family for incorrectly telling them that the bodies of the two men have been found.

According to the newspaper, ambassador Fred Arruda told the family that the embassy was "misled" by information it had received from "investigating officials." He added that the search operation will go on, "with no efforts being spared."

But a spokesman for indigenous group Univaja, which has been searching around the clock for the missing, said the search for Phillips and Pereira was nearing the end as the area left to search kept shrinking, Reuters reported.

On Sunday, search teams looking for the two men found a backpack, laptop and other personal items belonging to them submerged in a river.

Search teams have been focusing their efforts around a spot in the Itaquai river, near the city of Atalaia do Norte, where volunteers from the Matis Indigenous group say on Saturday they found a tarp from the boat used by the missing men.

Last week, police also reported finding traces of blood in Amarildo da Costa de Oliveira's boat. He has previously denied any wrongdoing and claims police tortured him to try to get a confession, his family told the Associated Press.

The area in which the pair was travelling has seen violent conflicts between fishermen, poachers and government agents. Violence has grown as drug trafficking gangs battle for control of waterways to ship cocaine, although the Itaquai is not a known drug trafficking route.

	Authorities have said a main line of the police investigation into the disappearance has pointed to an international network that pays poor fishermen to fish illegally in the Javari Valley reserve, which is Brazil's second-largest Indigenous territory.
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HEADLINE	06/14 Missouri: 'unspecific mass shooting' threat
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/kansas-city-school-district-cancels-summer-classes-unspecific-mass-shooting-threat
GIST	<p>A Missouri school district said Tuesday evening it is closing its summer school on Wednesday over an "unspecific mass shooting" threat and the FBI is investigating.</p> <p>"Safety is our top priority, and we are committed to telling you what we can when we can," the district wrote in a message posted to Facebook. "The Blue Springs Police Department alerted the FBI of a possible threat related to an unspecific mass shooting. The FBI has confirmed that the individual in question whose whereabouts are unknown is dangerous."</p> <p>The district, in Blue Springs, Missouri, a suburb of Kansas City, said the closure was out of an abundance of caution, adding, "We believe the best course of action is to close our summer school sites and all school programming until further notice."</p> <p>The district said it knew the closure would be a "burden to many of our families and we ask for your understanding and flexibility as we continue to keep our students, staff, and schools safe."</p> <p>It said another update would come Wednesday evening.</p> <p>No other details were given about the threat.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 WA police lead crime data reporting
SOURCE	https://www.axios.com/local/seattle/2022/06/14/washington-police-agencies-buck-trend-of-not-reporting-crime-data
GIST	<p>Nearly all of Washington's police agencies reported 2021 crime statistics to the FBI, even as 40% of law enforcement agencies nationwide failed to do so, according to data provided to Axios by The Marshall Project.</p> <p>Why it matters: Washington state law enforcement agencies bucked a trend that experts say will result in a data gap that makes it harder to analyze crime trends and fact-check claims politicians make about crime, per The Marshall Project, a nonprofit criminal justice news organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "It's going to be really hard for policymakers to look at what crime looks like in their own community and compare it to similar communities," Jacob Kaplan, a criminologist at Princeton University, said. <p>What happened: Roughly 9 out of 10 police agencies in Washington state submitted full or partial 2021 crime data, according to The Marshall Project's dataset.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That's far higher than the 6 out of 10 of agencies that did so across the rest of the country. Washington's actual reporting rate is in fact even higher, as some agencies that submitted crime statistics to the FBI shortly before a March reporting deadline weren't captured in The Marshall Project's dataset. (This includes the police department in Tukwila, south of Seattle.) Other agencies listed as not reporting were all in jurisdictions of about 10,000 residents or fewer — or were tribal police agencies. The state's largest departments, including in Seattle, King County, Tacoma, Spokane and Vancouver, Wash., all reported data to the FBI.

The backdrop: Last year the FBI retired its nearly century-old national crime data collection program and switched to a new system, the National Incident-Based Reporting System, which gathers more-specific information on each incident.

- The FBI announced the transition years ago and the federal government spent hundreds of millions of dollars to help local police make the switch, yet nearly 7,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies did not send crime data to the voluntary program in 2021.

What they're saying: Steve Strachan, executive director of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, said the new reporting system makes it easier to compare crime rates from year to year as well as trends between jurisdictions.

- He said his organization, which acts as a clearinghouse for crime data from local police agencies, has been working with local departments on the transition to the new reporting system for several years.
- "The FBI in fact sends other states to us for advice, and we are pretty proud of that," Strachan told Axios last week.

The big picture: Roughly 40% of law enforcement agencies nationwide, including departments in New York City and Los Angeles, did not submit any data in 2021.

Between the lines: Strachan said budget and staffing issues may have made it more difficult for some smaller law enforcement agencies around the country to transition to the new reporting system.

- Other police officials nationwide told Axios reporters they've been stymied by technical issues that they're still working out.

The bottom line: Regardless of the reasons, the data deficit could make research and policy development complicated — especially in states that have much lower rates of reporting than Washington.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Private prisons a very Australian problem
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/akezwp/private-prisons-are-a-very-australian-problem
GIST	<p>In the early days of the pandemic, the largest prison in Australia opened its doors on the mid-north coast of New South Wales.</p> <p>The management and operation of Clarence Correctional Centre is outsourced by the New South Wales government to a UK-based multinational called Serco. Proud of its accomplishment, the state government has repeatedly boasted of the jobs and economic boost brought by the facility, which can house 1700 inmates.</p> <p>But there are serious concerns around the privatisation of incarceration in Australia, something that is more prevalent here than in the US. A lack of transparency – and redacted contracts – make it impossible to test the claim that privatisation is more cost-effective, while numerous issues have been raised around safety, care and “inadequate” services in these facilities.</p> <p>Serco was paid \$167 million in 2021 to run the Clarence prison, and will be paid about \$2.6 billion over the course of its two-decade long contract. The outsourcing of the prison – and the focus on its economic potential – are standard for Australia’s approach to jails. We commonly associate these things with America – but it is a uniquely Australian problem.</p> <p>In the US, about 8 percent of the prison population are in privately-run facilities. In Australia, that figure is more than 20 percent. The three largest prisons in Australia are run by private, typically foreign companies that also run prisons in the US and around the world.</p> <p>And while the US has shown signs of a shift away from the privatisation of incarceration, Australia’s biggest states have insisted on continuing it. There aren’t many signs this will change and companies are locked into contracts for decades to come.</p>

University of Sydney Business School Professor Jane Andrew, who focuses on financial accounting, has studied the arguments for and against private prisons in Australia. She says that, crucially, the Australian public needs to become aware that private prisons exist before any major debate can begin.

“We imagine it’s America that privatises core services, not us,” she told VICE. “It’s a wonderful distraction to imagine it’s not us whilst it’s actually happening here”.

“Incarceration is such an overused instrument that’s so ratcheted up as a powerful instrument in politics. We need to use incarceration for a relatively small percentage of criminal behaviour. We excessively rely on it.

The central argument for private prisons is the same used for privatisation in general: that letting the private sector take the reins will lead to the more efficient and cost-effective operation of these facilities. For private prisons, this claim remains largely untested.

There are four private companies operating prisons in Australia: Serco, G4S, GEO Group and MTC-Broadspectrum. Just these four companies combined will be paid \$613.28 million annually by the Western Australian, New South Wales, Victorian and South Australian governments.

According to the mother of a man incarcerated at Parklea prison in NSW, the impact of this privatisation is felt across a number of touchpoints: the cost of basic items, the cost of phone calls, the standard of medical care and issues with booking video calls with inmates.

“Only three staff are available during restricted hours to field phone calls from families of over 1000 inmates,” she told VICE.

“I can make 200 calls and spend several hours each week trying to make a booking. The systems are inadequate to handle the volume, but that is more money from their bottom line”.

Contracts for private prisons typically run for decades and are heavily redacted, making an informed debate about just how successful privatisation has been difficult.

Meanwhile, health services – typically run by a separate private company or the state government – make up another level of prison privatisation.

At Clarence prison, in NSW, the state government has reverted to a model where one private company is responsible for all the operations of the facility.

According to a former doctor in Australian prisons, who has worked across private and publicly-run facilities, said the level of commitment to the work – and rehabilitating people – differs greatly.

“The public providers are all committed. They’re often under-resourced and under-respected, but everyone under the public system is there for the public service and are committed,” he says.

“The private system I’m seeing will run to a standard which is the lowest common denominator which they perceive their contract means.”

Elsewhere, the Human Rights Law Commission (HRLC) has campaigned strongly against private prisons for several years.

Senior lawyer at the HRLC, Monique Hurley, says private prisons can often see “profits trump respect for human rights”.

“Human rights do not end at prison gates, and governments shouldn’t try to shirk responsibility by caging people in private prisons,” Hurley told VICE.

“Private prisons are run off a business model where their existence depends on locking more and more people up. Instead of enabling private companies to profit off people’s punishment, governments across Australia should be focused on reducing the number of people being funnelled into prisons in the first place.”

Professor Andrew has attempted to prove that privatisation makes prison operations more cost-effective while also improving public accountability.

“What was tricky about our project was that we discovered that not a lot of information is in the public domain,” she said. “That challenges the first claim about accountability – if there’s no information then we can’t hold the government to account.

“And there’s absolutely no evidence that it’s cheaper.”

While Australia’s two biggest states have continued to embrace private prisons - and are locked into decades-long contracts with multinationals - the tide has turned elsewhere.

As of last year, there are no longer any private prisons in Queensland, after two prisons were brought back into public control following scathing reports by the corruption watchdog.

The Crime and Corruption Commission report in late 2018 found higher levels of assaults on staff in the private prisons along with lower levels of transparency.

The WA government has also cut short a contract with private operator Sodexo for the Melaleuca prison, after the independent inspector found a “bewildering” lack of clarity around basic operational matters.

Despite this move, the state government has committed to keeping its largest prison – the Acacia Prison – in private hands for decades to come.

According to the mother of a man imprisoned at Parklea, there is an inherent contradiction at play.

“They need to make a profit and there’s a lack of transparency and accountability,” she said.

“Providing a public service and making money is surely a conflict of interest.”

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HEADLINE	06/14 No understanding scope of pandemic fraud
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/jun/14/feds-nowhere-near-understand-scope-covid-19-fraud/
GIST	<p>The Secret Service has “hundreds” of investigations into international criminal syndicates suspected of stealing taxpayers’ money from pandemic relief programs, the agency’s top coronavirus official told Congress on Tuesday.</p> <p>But he and other federal investigators also said they can’t yet say how much of the trillions of dollars paid out in relief was fraudulent.</p> <p>“We are nowhere near a full understanding of the fraud landscape,” said Hannibal “Mike” Ware, the inspector general at the Small Business Administration, which doled out more than \$1.3 trillion in loans.</p> <p>Estimates by outside analysts run deep into the hundreds of billions of dollars, with perhaps \$250 billion alone stolen from the \$900 billion in pandemic unemployment benefits. Haywood Talcove, CEO of government business at LexisNexis Risk Solutions, figures a majority of that flowed to overseas actors.</p> <p>Little of it has been clawed back.</p> <p>Roy Dotson, the Secret Service’s pandemic fraud recovery coordinator, said they’ve seized \$1.26 billion and only a “slight amount” was from international fraudsters.</p>

“Anything we can recover we will recover. Obviously, when it leaves the United States and goes international it makes our job tougher,” he said.

The officials described a government wholly unprepared for the massive spending Congress pumped into the economy in the early months of the pandemic. The money helped keep the economy afloat, but also lined the pockets of fraudsters — including some syndicates connected with America’s adversaries such as Russia and Iran.

Michael E. Horowitz, inspector general at the Justice Department and head of the Pandemic Response Advisory Committee, said a key anti-fraud analytics tool built for the Obama-era economic stimulus spending was allowed to lapse in 2015. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, they had to rebuild that tool from scratch, at a cost of \$40 million.

The tool allows comparisons of massive sets of data, such as addresses, telephone numbers and Social Security numbers associated with relief requests.

“We’ve identified well over 1 million suspiciously used Social Security numbers for multiple applications,” Mr. Horowitz said.

One Social Security number has shown up in pandemic unemployment applications in 29 states. And a single telephone number was used for 1,400 Paycheck Protection Program loans from the Small Business Administration.

“We shouldn’t have 29 states giving benefits to the same Social Security number,” Mr. Horowitz said.

He said tools to stop bogus payments on the front end are important, but now investigators need more money to go after fraud. He said investments in the inspector general offices can deliver a 15-fold return on investment in fraudulent claims blocked or recovered.

He also warned that Congress needs to change the law and extend a statute of limitations for prosecuting fraud from small business loan programs. Current law only allows a five-year window, and investigators are already into the third year for many applications.

Legislation has already cleared the House, and Mr. Horowitz urged senators to follow through.

The officials were testifying to the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

Lawmakers in both parties said the need for speed in getting money out the door trumped controls.

“The greatest country on earth can do better than this in distributing a huge amount of money,” said Rep. Jamie Raskin, Maryland Democrat.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Patriot Front ‘strategically’ planned violence
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/court-docs-white-supremacist-group-strategically-planned-to-clash-in-idaho-gay-pride-event
GIST	COEUR D’ALENE, Idaho - The group of white men, arrested for conspiracy to riot at Saturday's gay pride event in Idaho , strategically planned their operation and were dressed for a fight, according to court documents. According to Kootenai County prosecutors, Coeur d'Alene police officers believed that the 31 men, suspected of being part of a nationwide white supremacist group, intended to incite physical confrontation and cause disorder at the North Idaho Pride Alliance’s Pride in the Park event. Court documents obtained

by FOX 13 say that the group had been strategizing this altercation for quite some time, with military-style drills and an outline of the operation.

It was discovered through information online that Thomas Rousseau, one of the members arrested on Saturday, was allegedly the leader and founder of Patriot Front. During his arrest, authorities seized documents from him that outlined a thorough plan of attack for the event on June 11.

Court records show that Rousseau's documents included a manifesto that discussed the group's purpose for being there, which was to raise a voice against the moral depravity which permits events, such as [pride events](#), to take place.

Investigators also found documents outlining call locations, primary checkpoints, drill times, prep times and observation windows. There were GPS coordinates for a drop point with two backup plans, referencing using smoke grenades at the discretion of a "column coordinator," court documents said. The exit strategy was also outlined saying, "Once an appropriate amount of time and confrontational dynamic has been established."

On Saturday, a concerned citizen called police saying a group of men, who looked "like a little army," were loading themselves into the cargo area of a U-Haul truck. The caller reported members of the group wearing similar clothing, masks, and even carrying riot shields. According to court documents, the identity of the caller will remain anonymous throughout the investigation, due to the group allegedly being part of Patriot Front, a white nationalist and neo-fascist hate group known for being violent.

Local law enforcement staffed extra personnel on Saturday due to credible intelligence indicating there would be groups coming into town intending to seek out oppositional contact with other crowds gathered in downtown Coeur d'Alene. When the U-Haul carrying the group was stopped by authorities, multiple officers, troopers and SWAT officers responded as a safety concern, since there were more than 20 people in the truck.

Idaho State Patrol Trooper Archer was one of the first officers on scene during the arrest, and he noted the group's attire and equipment:

"As I was observing each person, I noted the similarity and uniformity of their clothing. They were wearing primarily blue shirts and tan pants. Several of the Individuals had a 'Patriot Front' patch on the arm of their shirt. Nearly all were wearing a hat, face mask, and sunglasses. Several of the individuals were wearing hard plastic shin guards and other protective gear. The majority of the hats had a hard plastic-type insert inside the hat, similar to a hard hat worn by construction workers. The adorned equipment was similar in nature to our law enforcement riot control equipment utilized when we are anticipating a physical altercation."

Authorities say they found a smoke grenade, multiple fashioned metal shields, flags on abnormally long metal poles and voice amplification devices in the back of the U-Haul.

Those arrested came from at least 11 states, including Washington, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Arkansas. Thomas Rosseau, who had a Texas driver's license, told officers he traveled to Coeur d'Alene to peacefully exercise his first amendment rights. Another suspect, Wesley Van Horn from Alabama, was told by an officer that he traveled a long way for his cause. Van Horn replied, "We go where we are needed."

Among the people arrested, five had ties to [Washington state](#): Colton Brown of Ravensdale, Michael Buster of [Spokane](#), James Johnson of Concrete, Justin O'Leary of [Des Moines](#) and Spencer Simpson of [Ellensburg](#).

Patriot Front is a white supremacist neo-Nazi group whose members perceive Black Americans, Jews and LGBTQ people as enemies, said Jon Lewis, a George Washington University researcher who specializes in homegrown violent extremism.

	Their playbook, Lewis said, involves identifying local grievances to exploit, organizing on platforms like the messaging app Telegram and ultimately showing up to events marching in neat columns, in blue- or white-collared-shirt uniforms, in a display of strength.
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HEADLINE	06/14 WA #1 in nation catalytic converter thefts
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/wa-ranks-no-1-in-catalytic-converter-theft-in-u-s/
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA — Washington state is number one in the nation in catalytic converter theft, according to a new report on national crime statistics, and Sen. Jeff Wilson, R-Longview, says the Legislature must continue cracking down on the crime in the next legislative session.</p> <p>“The statistics we just got from BeenVerified ought to shock all of us,” said Wilson in a release. “A 10,000% increase? Holy cow. That’s too big to ignore.”</p> <p>The report from BeenVerified.com, a national statistical-analysis firm, indicates Washington has seen a 10,000% increase in catalytic converter theft since 2019, the press release states.</p> <p>Wilson says he led efforts in the state Senate this year to pass a bill cracking down on catalytic converter theft. The resulting compromise, passed in the form of House Bill 1815, starts the job, but Wilson said it’s a long way from being finished.</p> <p>“The resulting legislation was one of the most important bipartisan compromises of the 2022 legislative session,” said Wilson in the release. “Unfortunately, it got us only halfway there.”</p> <p>Wilson said the legislation did not increase prison time or increase law enforcement funding but laid the foundation for an effective response to the fast-growing crime.</p> <p>The release states this year’s legislation imposes strict requirements on scrapyards and wreckers that purchase used catalytic converters, to prevent them from entering legitimate retail channels. Among them, purchasers must check and record seller IDs and proof of ownership, and cash payments on the spot are prohibited. Violations are a misdemeanor, with a fine of \$1,000 per converter.</p>
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HEADLINE	06//14 Kirkland student faces felony charges
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/kirkland-student-faces-felony-charge-after-posting-social-media-threats-prosecutors-say/
GIST	<p>King County prosecutors Tuesday charged an 18-year-old Kirkland student with two counts of felony harassment for allegedly threatening to kill two classmates.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the student, a Juanita High School senior, posted a threatening message Sunday on Instagram referencing last month’s school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, where a gunman killed 19 children and two adults.</p> <p>In his post, the student urged people not to give him a reason for violence, writing that school shootings are avoidable if everyone is kind to one another, according to probable cause documents.</p> <p>The Seattle Times typically names adults when they have been charged, but is not in this case because it concerns a high school student.</p> <p>He also wrote that his father had a gun, sent photos of a shotgun and rifle cases in a direct message to a fellow student and directly threatened another student, the probable cause documents allege.</p> <p>The post spread fear among dozens of parents and students, according to court documents. Area 911 dispatchers received 55 calls about the post and direct messages some students received from the student, according to Kirkland police.</p>

	<p>His father took him to a police station to be interviewed at the request of law enforcement, according to court documents.</p> <p>The 18-year-old said he was bullied and had “had enough,” so he made the post to scare people into being nice to him, according to Kirkland police. He said he didn’t intend for his posts to be taken literally and didn’t know if he wanted to carry out a school shooting, police reported.</p> <p>He also told detectives that his intention was to scare people and he had a list of people he wanted to harm or “get rid of,” and that he didn’t intend to hurt anyone who wasn’t “guilty,” documents say.</p> <p>He told detectives he felt he couldn’t risk talking with a mental health professional about his thoughts of harming people who bullied him, according to court documents.</p> <p>The state ordered him not to directly contact any students he’s accused of threatening, acquire guns or other weapons or go to any Lake Washington School District property, according to court documents.</p> <p>He remained in custody as of Tuesday evening with bail set at \$99,000, according to Kirkland police. He has not yet been assigned a lawyer, according to the King County Superior Court Clerk’s Office.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Student threatens LGBTQ+ demonstrators
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/nation-world/national/article262498837.html
GIST	<p>A middle school and high school were placed on lockdown after a student told a classmate he wanted to aim a machine gun at students rallying in support of the LGBTQ+ community in front of the schools, police said.</p> <p>The boy was taken into custody Monday, June 13, the Kalama Police Department said in a release.</p> <p>Dozens of students were participating in a walkout at Kalama High School in support of the LGBTQ+ community, according to KOIN 6. The walkout came after a transgender student was reportedly assaulted in the hallways after school on Monday, June 6. The student was treated in a hospital.</p> <p>On June 13, a male student spoke with another about the demonstration, “expressing a desire to aim an automatic machine gun in the direction of the demonstrators,” police said.</p> <p>Though they did not see a gun, the student was concerned by their classmate’s remarks and reported them to school administrators, police said.</p> <p>Police responded to the two schools, which share a campus, at around 12:30 p.m., the release said.</p> <p>The two schools were immediately put on lockdown. Law enforcement said they located the male student off campus, and he was taken in for questioning.</p> <p>“[C]riminal charges will be forwarded to the county prosecutor’s office,” the release said. McClatchy News has reached out to the Kalama Police Department for further information.</p>
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HEADLINE	06/14 Lawmaker office vandalism a diversion?
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article262497487.html
GIST	<p>The same suspects who tossed a flare into a state lawmaker’s business on Fourth Avenue early Monday morning later burglarized an antique business about a mile away, police said Tuesday.</p>

At 4:05 a.m. Monday, two men approached Hometown Property Management on Fourth Avenue, smashed a window and tossed a flare into the business. That business is owned by state Rep. Andrew Barkis, R-Lacey. It also apparently is home to The House Republican campaign offices.

Twenty-minutes later, three suspects were seen breaking into or aiding a burglary at Lighthouse Antiques in the 2100 block of Pacific Avenue Southeast, said Lt. Paul Lower.

Police have recovered video images from both locations, he said.

Although state Rep. JT Wilcox said Monday he was concerned that Republicans were being targeted, police think the suspects may have created a diversion at Barkis' business to commit a burglary in a second location, Lower said.

"Two of the three suspects are clearly the suspects from the flare-attempted arson," a police report reads.

The suspects used a ladder to get on top of the antique business, then entered it through a skylight, Lower said. An employee later found several smashed display cases and a pile of glass underneath the skylight. Police also were able to recover DNA samples because it appears one of the suspects cut himself while breaking into a jewelry case, according to the report.

The value of the stolen merchandise is estimated at more than \$5,000 and the cost to replace the skylight at more than \$2,000, according to the report.

The burglary suspects left the antique business — leaving the ladder in some bushes — at 4:32 a.m. Monday and headed west on Pacific Avenue.

They were last seen driving an early 2000s model Subaru Outback with a trailer hitch.

The two suspects at both locations are described this way: One is white, average height and weight, wearing a light-colored bucket hat, light-colored sweatshirt, light-colored athletic shorts and light-colored shoes, according to the report. The other is described as a light-skinned man, tall, slender, wearing a black jacket, dark jeans and black shoes with white on the back of the heels. He also had black shaved hair.

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HEADLINE	06/14 Two cops shot, killed responding to call
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officers-shot-killed-responding-call-california/story?id=85400216
GIST	<p>Two police officers have died after being shot in El Monte, California, Tuesday while responding to a possible stabbing at a motel, authorities said.</p> <p>The El Monte Police Department said two officers "immediately took gunfire upon arrival" at the Siesta Inn.</p> <p>The officers were taken to LAC-USC Medical Center, where they died of their injuries, ABC News Los Angeles station KABC reported.</p> <p>The suspect was also shot and died at the scene, according to KABC.</p> <p>Neither the police officers nor the suspect have been identified, and additional details about the incident were not immediately available.</p> <p>"There are no words to describe our grief and devastation by this senseless act as we learned about the passing of two of our police officers," the city, police department and El Monte Police Officers Association said in a statement. "It weighs heavy on our hearts and we are sending our support to their</p>

	<p>families. We would also like to thank the El Monte community and our surrounding government agencies for the outpouring support we have received in the last few hours."</p> <p>The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has taken over the investigation, the El Monte Police Department said.</p> <p>El Monte is east of Los Angeles.</p>
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